

# International Crossroads

## Cuba

### **Lifestyle**

*Fifteen-year-old has party to present herself to the community*

### **History**

*Soldier endures torture before gaining freedom*

### **Entertainment**

*Cubans enjoy a variety of cigars*

### **Business**

*Casa particulars serve as rest stops for the weary*

### **People**

*Tour guide finds beauty of country through tourists*

Cuba: Geography

Location: Caribbean, island between the Caribbean Sea and the North Atlantic Ocean, south of Florida

Map references: Central America and the Caribbean

Area:

total area: 110,860 sq km

land area: 110,860 sq km

comparative area: slightly smaller than PennsylvaniaCuba:

Geography



The Cuban Coat of Arms is another national symbol that represents the Island and its people. The heart shaped form is divided into three sections. The top horizontal section depicts the geographic location of the Island in the Gulf of Mexico, between North and South America. The white and blue stripes symbolize the departmental status of Cuba in the colonial days. The final section stands for the Cuban people and their unyielding nature. This is accomplished by showing the country's landscape with the surdy roval palm in the center.

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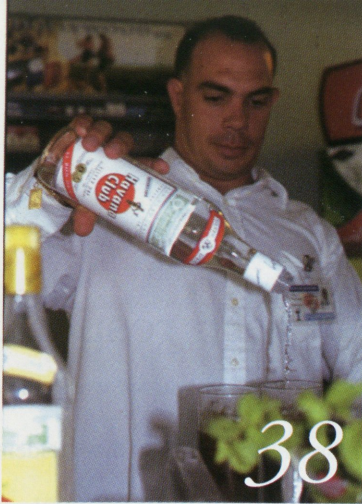
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Welcome to the Cuba Semester.

In an on-going attempt to study the world, Missouri Southern has yet again selected a country that needs to be studied and analyzed.

Although the country is just a short boat ride away from Florida, it still remains as a country that Americans know little about. Its government, the people and social life stand still in the dark. As fascinating and beautiful as the country is — it's still a mystery. We don't know enough about Cuba. Hopefully, through this magazine, and a semester full of speakers and special events dedicated to Cuba, the Missouri Southern community will finally be able to understand the prestige of this country.

In the *International Crossroads*, four students within the Southern communications department were given the opportunity to travel to Cuba and study the people and their lifestyle. Everything from shopping to the famous Cuban cigars is discussed here.

The venture to Cuba would not have been possible without the direction and support from Dr. Gwen Murdock and Dr. John Couper. The two were instrumental in helping us find our stories and talk to the people we needed to talk with. It was a pleasure to get to know Gwen and John, and we thank them.

To the Missouri Southern State University community: enjoy the Cuba Semester. Take the time and attend a lecture or discussion.

You'll be glad you did.

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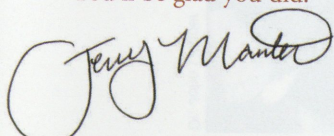
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# Just open up your eyes

Column by Jerry Manter

## Cuba needs to figure out how to treat its people with respect.

It's really hard to complain about Cuba, its people and my overall impression of the island. To be honest, there's really just one: The government.

A group of *Chart* editors, myself included, sat down at a hotel restaurant to grab a quick bite of lunch. Also joining us was Rosa, an 11-year-old resident of Santiago.

I looked over to Rosa. She's normally very outgoing, but at lunch she seemed quiet and distant from us.

Although the café didn't do much for the editors, it certainly made an impression on Rosa. This was luxury. Her family could never afford anything this expensive, let alone be served by a waiter. Before we ordered, a large man stood by our table.

It was the hotel manager.

"The girl must go," he said in broken English.

I told him it was OK, Rosa was our friend, and we were planning to pay for her lunch.

"No, her parents aren't here," he said. "She must go."

I couldn't believe it.

The manager wasn't practicing a rule the

hotel or restaurant had. They simply would not serve a Cuban. The government is very strict about how much Cubans and tourists can interact. At designated tourist locations, such as the hotel, the government does not want Cubans interacting with tourists.

I was appalled. The five of us stood up and made sure the manager knew that the restaurant would not be receiving any of our business.

We walked to the steps of the hotel, and again hotel management made it obvious that Rosa was not welcome.

Rosa was close to experiencing a rare opportunity, and because of a few rules and regulations, she was forced to leave.

That rule they gave us about her parents not there? Bogus.

The day before, other members of the Missouri Southern group were about to have dinner at a restaurant when management notified them they didn't have enough food.

Not enough food? Was that really the reason?

Again, the group brought a couple of

Cuban friends. All they wanted was to buy them a meal.

What was amazing about the incident was Rosa.

While the editors were upset with management and trying to find another place to eat, all she could do was give us hugs and smile.

It's really disappointing that a government can force its people to such low standards of living.

The country is breathtaking, and its people are some of the friendliest in the world. Within five minutes of an interview, a Santiago woman offered me a home-cooked meal at her home.

Cuba is ready.

The country is ready to meet the world with prosperity, trade and friendly travel. The government needs to open up its eyes and see the potential it really has.

It will see its current form of dictatorship is at fault for decades of poverty and low standards of living.

I hope to see the United States and Cuba become allies again.

If anything, it's about time.



Dr. John Couper

Michael Edward, a resident of Havana, flashes the "peace" sign while showing Josh Ray (left) and Jerry Manter his taxi. Edward makes his living by driving his bike taxi for tourists wanting a lift around town.



# National Pastime

Story by Philip Martin, Photo by Jerry Manter

## Baseball moves from simple game to tool of the government.

One myth of why Fidel Castro hates America is because he wasn't allowed to try out for the New York Yankees.

Whether that's true or not, baseball has found a way into Cuban life like no other sport has.

Cubans began playing baseball in the late 1800s after rejecting soccer and bullfighting, because it was all too similar to Spanish culture.

When Castro took over Cuba in 1959, one of his first objectives was to get the country in shape. He started a nationwide fitness program. All ages could come together and exercise. It was common to see people exercising together on the street in the middle of the afternoon.

Baseball is the most popular sport in Cuba and keeps many in good shape.

Ricardo Pascual, a 25-year-old second baseman, said the athletes are really the only difference between American and Cuban baseball.

"American baseball is professional and Cubans are amateurs," he said.

Pascual has been playing since he was a child. He said by playing baseball, the game makes people successful.

"The women admire you for playing baseball," he said.

"It makes it easier to get a date."

Cuban baseball was put to the test in March 1999 when the Baltimore Orioles traveled to Cuba. The Cuban Sugar Kings, the national team, lost to the Orioles, 3-2, in the first meeting of a U.S. professional team and a Cuban club since

March 1959. On May 3, 1999, the Sugar Kings exacted revenge on the Orioles, 12-6.

There is no question that Cuban baseball players are good. Since the start of the Baseball World Cup in 1938, Cuba has dominated the cup winning a total of 23 times. The United States has won the cup twice, in 1974 and 1976.

An offshoot of baseball in Cuba is a similar game called four-corners. The game is played with four players on teams - first, second and third basemen and a shortstop. The shortstop also serves as the outfielder.

There is no pitching involved, and the game only lasts three innings.

Because the game is played in a small area, the players can only walk. No pitching means the players hit the balls with their hands.

The ball is a soft rubber ball like a tennis ball or a racquetball.

Pedro Sana, a four-corners player for two years, said the game is played on the street, usually in the shade.

"The teams change all the time, with people leaving the game and others joining in the middle of the game," Sana said.

Just like baseball, if there is a tie, the game goes into extra innings. Only men play baseball and four corners.

"Girls play softball," Sana said.



Four-corner players bat using their hands. The ball is a soft, rubber ball.





Jerry Manter

A group of uniformed students plays a game in a park. Any Cuban who goes to school can receive a completely free education.

# Hitting the Books

Story by Josh Ray

## Students talk about Cuban schools.

Jose Antonio Martinez Duharte has been going to the Universidad de Oriente for five years, and he hasn't had to pay any money for it.

At 23, Duharte is about to graduate with a degree in telecommunications, but after he graduates, he still will not be able to start his career.

In Cuba, there are four steps of schooling before someone can receive a career that requires a degree.

Children start primary school at six years old.

After spending six years there, they go on to attend three years of secondary school. Upon completing that, some of the students, based upon grades, will be selected to study three years at the pre-university school.

Students who are not selected go to technical school. In the 12th grade, students are classified and broken up into groups

according to their grades.

They are then allowed to make selections of their careers and take a test to get into the university. Before they can go into the university, they must complete one year in the army.

Students who do not attend college must spend two years in the army.

Upon completing those two years, they may take one year of school to prepare them for the university and their careers. Duharte said the prep school after the army service is "only if you have good behavior in the army."

Classes are held 10 months of the year, with a break in July and August.

While it is a long process and a lot of work, Duharte said he likes the school system of his country and the education is worth it.

"It's a way to prepare myself better in the telecommunications," he said.





Jerry Manter

A bashful student in his uniform shies away from the camera.

Upon completing his schooling, he has to spend two years in social service as an apprentice before he can even begin his career. After that time, he will apply for jobs and be offered jobs in the telecommunications field, which he loves.

"I like to stay on the computer," Duharte said. "I like electronics. It's easy to get a career in telecommunications."

Scholarships and loans are not given in Cuba. The schooling is free for the students, and they actually get paid to attend the universities. In his fifth year of school, Duharte was paid 50 pesos a month to attend school. In the first year, he made 20 pesos per month.

Some Cubans who did not go to the university will receive a second chance later in life.

Raiza Rodriguez attends a polytechnical school, where she is studying to become an official pharmacist.

Before attending the polytechnical school, Rodriguez was allowed to sell medicines, but upon finishing at her school, she will be able to sell the medicines and produce them in a laboratory.

The enterprise she works for pays her a full salary to attend school.

To get into the polytechnical school, she said she was required to work for at least two years in her field. During the trial period, she had to show that she could "do the job well" before asking to go to school again. Her company agreed.

She is excited about getting the second chance because she will have more responsibility at her job and will make more money upon graduating from school.

"I don't get bored at my job, because I don't have time for that," Rodriguez said. "I can't even pause to breathe."

The longest amount of school time required is for people who go to the university to study medicine. They are required to attend six years at the university.



Josh Ray

From left, Raiza Rodriguez, Yurien Pérez, Liudmila Rufin and Geiza Chaviano study for exams at the polytechnical school in Santa Clara.



# Ancient Traditions

Story and Photos by Philip Martin



Slaves dressed up their African tribal gods as Catholic saints to keep their religion hidden from the Spanish masters.

## Santería combines Catholic beliefs with African tribal religions.

Inside a small wooden box behind a door lives three of the most powerful deities of Santería.

Santería is better known as saint worship. The religion dates back 300 years when the Spanish began bringing slaves to Cuba.

"The tribes from the Congo, Lucumi and Carabali joined with small tribes to make a religion," said Salvador Morales Perez, a Santería priest.

"The different age groups and towns all joined this new religion."

Since the slave masters forbade all African religions, the slaves dressed up their gods in Catholic garb and worshipped them.

The slave masters made their slaves practice Christianity, so the slaves were forced to practice their own religion at night to preserve their beliefs. The religion was an oral tradition shared within families.

But the tradition changed in 1850 when the slave masters began to free their slaves

to help with the war against Spain.

The masters wanted to know about this religion, so they began to write it down because the slaves didn't know how to write.

"The slave didn't give all the information he knew," Perez said. "He didn't trust

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***"My god is my father in Santería. It's the same as a priest believing in God, as my belief in orishas."***

---

the rich people."

At the start of the 20th century, those who knew Santería started to write down the details of the religion. This movement began in Havana where the people combined the written and oral traditions of the religion.

Santería tradition states that every per-

son has a different god.

"My god is my father in Santería," he said. "It's the same as a priest believing in God, as my belief in *orishas*."

Perez said everyone has Orula inside of them.

Orula is the Santería equivalent to Saint Francis of Assisi. Orula can say what is going to happen in a person's life by the roll of a cockle. With the special-made cockle, a priest can know everything about a person's life.

The three *orishas* kept in a box behind the door are Elegguá, Ogun and Ochosi. Elegguá serves as the messenger of the gods.

He is also the *orisha* a person prays to when they are having trouble in their life.

"When a door closes, he makes a better future for you with a woman, a job or money," Perez said.

The second *orisha* inside the box is Ogun, who is represented as an ironworker.

Perez said Ogun walks with a gun. The



third *orisha* is the one Cuban men pray to so they don't go to jail.

Ochosi is the hunter of jail.

If he catches a person, then that person goes to jail.

"Behind every door in Cuba everyone has offerings to these gods," he said.

Instead of fixed holidays such as Christmas and Easter, *Santería orisha's* have one day out of the year that is their specific day to be worshiped.

Unlike Catholicism, priests are in houses rather than churches.

Because the religion started in the slave quarters, there have never been churches for worship of the *orishas*.

"In Cuba, *Santería* and Catholic religion is enjoined," he said. "People can do both religions."



Cubans keep offerings to *orishas* behind their front door. Santería priests, like Salvador Morales Perez (left), keep boxes (above) with offerings to the three major *orishas*.



# Family Life

Story and Photo by Mandi Steele

## Everyday life consists of raising children, government-paid jobs.

Holding her 1-month-old son in her arms, Degsis Mustelier speaks softly to him as he nurses.

She named her first child, John Luis, after the baby's father and godfather. The 25-year-old said being a mother is exciting, but she can wait awhile before she has another.

"Sometimes it's a lot of work," she said.

Her mother lives less than a mile away, however, and helps Mustelier with the responsibilities a new mother must handle. Mustelier also receives help from her grandmother who also lives close by. There are many Cuban families that are close both in dis-

tance and in their relationships like Mustelier's family. But Mustelier is lucky; she also has the neighbors.

Her husband, Luis Hidalgo, 57, said the neighborhood is like a big family. All the little girls that live nearby love to come over and play with the baby, he said.

John Luis was baptized at the del Cobre Catholic church outside of Santiago. It is the same church Pope John Paul II visited when he came to Cuba. It meant a lot to Mustelier and Hidalgo that their son was baptized in del Cobre, an infamous place to most Cubans.

When Mustelier had the baby, she received a year's maternal leave from her job, and both her prenatal and birthing care costs were completely taken care of by the state. The only other help she receives from the government is a free ration of milk for five years. Since she's nursing, the baby doesn't need the milk, but they put it to good use anyway. If there was anything she wished she had for the baby that she doesn't have, she said she wishes she could give him the extra little things, like toys, that she can't afford.

Before she went on maternity leave, she only made 100 pesos a month, which is about \$5.

Hidalgo said he wishes he could give his family a big house in the United States. He works as an agricultural engineer and makes 180 pesos a month, almost \$10. Their house has cement floors and walls with three small rooms and a bathroom. It is sandwiched between many other houses down an alleyway in Santiago.

David Diaz lives in a much nicer home in Havana. He operates a *casa particular*, or bed and breakfast, and has one son of his own who's 5 and a stepson who's 11.

Both he and his wife have been married before and have a child from the previous marriages. His wife, Lidia, used to be a doctor, but now stays home and helps her husband with the *casa* business. She made 300 pesos a month, about \$15. She quit because she said she didn't like the work.

Diaz said he is also a veterinarian. He works with cows, horses and pigs in the rural areas outside Havana. Sometimes he'll work nights or mornings, but he has to make it so he can still take care of his guests while running the *casa* business.

He wouldn't say how much he made as veterinarian, a government job, but he said that he did like helping animals better than renting rooms.

He said many people in Cuba have more than one job to try and make more money. The government jobs don't pay a high salary, so many have found other ways to earn the extra cash they need.

"Lots of Cubans have a very good education, but work in another field," he said.



Degsis Mustelier's first child, John Luis, was named after his father and godfather. They live in a small house in Santiago.



# Never Been Kissed

Story and Photo by Philip Martin

Celebration marks sexual independence day for teenagers.



Yaimara Ray celebrates her 15th birthday. The birthday is regarded as the day when Ray can begin her sexual life without her parents' interference.

After decades of socialism, most celebrations have gone extinct in Cuba.

One celebration that still exists is *las fiestas de quince*, a birthday party for 15-year-old girls. The party serves as a celebration for when a girl has reached sexual maturity and can begin her sexual life without family interference.

Parents start saving for the party shortly after the girl is born. Esteban Ray, professor of medicine in Guantánamo, said he is happy that his daughter Yaimara is having her party. Leading up to the party, the girl is photographed in some "traditional places or pretty places," Esteban said.

Yaimara dressed in a blue gown that looks like it belongs in *Gone With The Wind*. Earlier in the day, she was wearing a dress similar to a wedding dress. She was photographed at the Hotel Casa Grande and Morro Castle in Santiago. Besides the photographer, there is a cameraman who videotapes her ascending or descending steps and walking around the place where she is being photographed.

"We take pictures and videotape her as a sort of souvenir," Esteban said. "This is so important that we want to keep a record of it."

During a party at the end of the week, the video and photos will be shown. Friends usually make the dress for the *quince*, as is the case for Yaimara. Her parents purchased the white dress from another family. She plans to sell it to another family. The blue dress, however, is hers to keep since friends made it for her.

Yaimara chose a close friend to do all of her makeup for her.

"This is a very special moment; I don't want to forget it," she said.

The tradition is a legacy left from the Spanish colonization of the island.

It's one of the few traditions still alive. The tradition makes Esteban proud.

"This makes me happy as a father," he said. "It's part of the tradition."

During the party, Yaimara's whole family will be there. The party is held where she is schooled, and her classmates and closest friends will be in attendance.

"This makes me feel very happy, and it's a good feeling to have," Yaimara said.





A group of teenagers in Trinidad works on fixing a bike. The bike is a popular form of transportation in Cuba.

# Moving Around Town

Story and Photos by Jerry Manter

## Cubans will use anything for transportation around the island.

When it comes to transportation in Cuba, anything goes.

Whether it's by horse, bicycle, car, motorbike or foot, Cubans will use anything to get around quickly and easily.

"I use my bike daily to go to school," said Lisseidy Connteras, a student from Santiago.

Connteras was walking her bike along with her sister Suleidy down a stretch of street not allowing bikes or motorcycles.

The two sisters share the bike on a regular basis, with Suleidy usually arranging herself just right on the middle bar.

"A bike is very useful," Connteras said. "You don't have to wait for a bus two or three times a day."

New bikes sell, on average, for \$100. Most are shipped from Mexico, Canada and even Italy.

The sisters believe bicycles are the best forms of transportation.

"Bikes are more efficient, there's few repairs, no gas or oil required," Suleidy said. "With bikes you just need some

grease and some good luck."

For Cubans who can afford it, motorcycles are the way to go.

Mariono Gonzales, a resident in Santiago, purchased a new motorcycle three months ago. He paid \$8,500 — a deal in his mind.

"The motorcycle is very economical," Gonzales said. "I use it all day."

Gonzales was on a street corner tuning up his clutch.

"It should be an easy fix," he said.

Although Cubans have many similar traffic rules and regulations as the United States, the sheer number of people on motorcycles is much higher.

Gonzales said with thousands of motorcycles on the streets, the possibility of accidents increases significantly.

"Other people drive way too fast and don't pay attention," he said. "They're looking for an accident."

Another popular form of transportation is the bike taxi. In Havana, riders lure tourists to take a ride for a tour of the city

or for a faster way to a destination.

"I ride the bike to feed my family," said Michael Edward, resident of Havana.

Edward has operated a bike taxi for more than six years. On average, he's able to take in \$3 to \$5 a day. A majority of the money Edward earns goes to the government and the owner of the bike.

"It keeps me strong," Edward said. "It's my life."

Last December, Edward met John Couper and Gwen Murdock. The married couple and Edward's family became good friends in a matter of days. Murdock is an instructor at Missouri Southern, while Couper teaches at Pittsburg State.

In another visit to the Edward home in June, Couper and Murdock gave a special gift to Edward. They offered to buy him his own taxi bike.

"I have never had anyone give me a present



so big before," Edward said.

Couper and Murdock were happy they could spread a little happiness to the Edward family.

"For us, it's not a big issue ... it makes him independent," Couper said. "It just seems fair."

Now that Edward will own his own bike, on busy days, he could make up to \$15.

"I will be much more relaxed," Edward said. "I have my own business."



Suleidy Connteras (left) and her sister Lisseidy own one bike between themselves. The sisters often share the bike to get to and from school.



Mariono Gonzales, resident of Santiago, says his motorcycle is his only means of transportation.



# Staying Cool

Story and Photo by Philip Martin

## Cubans attempt to lick the heat with ice cream cones.

Looking like it belongs in a science fiction movie, Coppelia is the cornerstone of the ice cream culture of Cuba.

The lines outside the famous ice cream stand stretch almost the full length of the block.

"They wait because they like it," said Josef Glec of Havana.

Glec said Coppelia started as the culture symbol of ice cream in the 1960s when it opened.

The store sits in the middle of a park with a flying saucer top supported by spider legs on either side. Coppelia serves approximately 30,000 customers a day. Customers don't have to wait too long. The lines usually move along at a pretty brisk pace, letting people into the shop two at a time.

"It's worth the wait," Glec said. "It is the best ice cream."

Coppelia was featured in the Tomás Gutierrez Alea's movie *Fresa y Chocolate*, which was based on Senal Paz's short story "The Woods, the Wolf and the New Man." The movie won the Academy Award for best international film. The film is named for the scene at Coppelia where Diego, the homosexual, orders strawberry ice cream, much to the consternation of David, the loyal Fidelista. Since the success of the movie, Coppelia has received more business from tourists and Cubans.

"Everybody eats here," Glec said. "Anyone can come here. It's the culture of Havana."

Although there is a Coppelia in every town, the store in Havana is the most popular. After the revolution, Fidel Castro stated Cuba would outdo America by having 39 flavors of ice cream. Cuba has never reached that mark, but it has made ice cream accessible to everyone by selling it on the street.

"Today it is strawberry," said Julio Cesar, a street ice cream vendor.

The vendors are outside during the days they have ice cream to sell. Sometimes the factory isn't able to make the frozen confection.

"Supplies for making ice cream are few," Cesar said. "This makes production of ice cream small. If there is ice cream to sell then we come out."

For three pesos, a customer can buy a cone with two scoops of ice cream.

Cesar said ice cream is a favorite dessert in Cuba because of the warm weather.

Yamera López said she likes ice cream, but she is not able to buy any.

"It is mainly schoolboys you see with it," López said. "The government gives it to them."

She said one of the drawbacks of eating ice cream is its fattening effects. Maria Idonea agrees with López.

"I wish I had it," Idonea said. "It fattens you up, and I'm already a little fat."

Idonea attributes the popularity of ice cream to Cuba's "aggressive climate." She said it "cools you off and it's tasty."

"Ice cream is a favorite thing in Cuba — it's a hot country," Cesar said.



Street vendors sell ice cream from the back of bicycles for three pesos. Fidel Castro attempted to make 39 flavors to outdo America.



# HOLY RELIC

Story by Philip Martin, Photo by Mandi Steele

## Patron saint receives offerings in hopes of answered prayers.

During a tropical storm, three fishermen were lost at sea and prayed to be saved.

Their prayer was answered when a wood-carved Madonna floated by on a board that read, "*Yo Soy la Virgen de la Caridad* (I am the Virgin of Charity)."

This is the statue that has two legends surrounding it. Its believers flock to the shrine in the *Basílica del Cobre*. One legend states the Madonna was being shipped from Spain to Cuba when the boat it was on sank.

Then one year later, the fishermen came upon it while praying for safety.

The other legend says the statue was given to an Indian chief by a conquistador in 1510 but had been set adrift on a raft when rival chiefs tried to seize the statue.

Pope Benedicto XV declared the Madonna the patron saint of Cuba on May 10, 1916.

"She is very special to me," said Mercedes Grillo Boerego, a 25-year-old Cuban from Havana. "She is the most important thing in my life."

Cubans and residents of other Caribbean islands flock to the church to make offerings and pray to the statue. The church is well-known for the offerings people bring while visiting. The church houses two Olympic gold medals, numerous signed baseballs and a Cuban flag from the Revolution.

Like the fisherman in Ernest Hemingway's *Old Man and the Sea* who promised to visit the church, Hemingway came in 1952 and dedicated his Nobel Prize for Literature to the Virgin. The Nobel Prize was stolen in 1988 but was later found. It's now in the possession of the Archbishop of Santiago.

Boerego came with her friends so she could pray for her husband.

Besides praying for family, Cubans pray for many things.

Ernesto Hidalgo, a resident of Santiago said he prays for health and economic prosperity.

"I come here to solve my problems," Hidalgo said. "I come here every month and make offerings."

Hidalgo has been attending the church since he was a little boy.

The church has become a place of pilgrimage to Cubans who once a year make their way to the church to fulfill a promise made to the saint at some difficult point in their lives.

"She is my spiritual mother and the spiritual mother of all of Cuba," Hidalgo said.

The church is centered in the middle of the town on top of a hill

next to an old iron mine that the town was known for until the mines were closed down. Visitors to the church are surrounded by hustlers trying to sell iron pyrite taken from the local mines.

When Pope John Paul II visited the country in 1998, he traveled to the small town to celebrate Mass.



The *Basílica del Cobre* houses Cuba's patron saint on the second floor. The wood carved Madonna dates back to the 16th century.



# A Trip to...The Real Cuba

Column by Josh Ray

When visiting another country, one should stay away from the tourist spots.

It amazes me how people will visit another culture, only to stay as close to their own culture as possible.

While in many countries, a tourist can stay in the hotels and eat at the restaurants and still see the actual culture of that country, Cuba is not one of those places. See, Cuba sort of has two different cultures. There's the tourist Cuba, and then there's the *real* Cuba. While both are alike in some ways, they are very different in most. I was given the pleasure of seeing both during my stay.

So what is the difference between the two? It's easy to see.

When many tourists go to Cuba, they see hotels. They get to stay in air-conditioned rooms with toilet seats and plenty of toilet paper. If they're lucky, they'll get cable (with HBO, VH1 and MTV), or maybe even a big crude drawing on the wall of a bald eagle reaming Fidel Castro in the butt (we had that on our wall in the Hotel Inglaterra). There might be a pool, and

there is definitely a bar where you can sit down and enjoy all the *mojitos* you can handle. Or just drink any cocktail you want, as long as it has rum as an ingredient.

Tourists can walk down the street and speak English to pretty much anyone and be understood. They can look around and see other tourists just as white and brightly dressed as themselves. They don't stand out. Only the hustlers give them a second glance. The streets are clean and there is a taxi every five feet waiting for anyone needing a ride.

They can pay \$10 and get into a club built in a cave. They can request American music and hear Nelly or Christina Aguilera (anything R&B, rap or pop, but never alternative).

That's not the real Cuba. The real Cuba is the back streets. When in the real Cuba, you're lucky if your air conditioner works, if you have one at all. The only circulation of the air might come from a shoddy fan with no cover on it. Televisions are few

and far between, and if you have one, three channels are the max.

For entertainment, you can go cockroach hunting at 2 a.m. only to see the ants carrying away your bounty when you wake up.

There are few hustlers, if any. Most people don't speak English at all. In the real Cuba, you are white, no matter how tanned you are. Every eye follows you, seeming to ask what you are doing so far away from the hotels. People drink rum straight and smoke the cheapest cigars possible, because it's all they can afford.

The streets are far from clean. The stench of trash and urine hangs in the air. Your clean tennis shoes become a nice shade of orange or brown from the mud and clay after it rains.

That is the real Cuba. It's not pretty. It's not fancy. It's old and beaten. It's not cigars, good rum or markets.

It's where the Cuban people live. It's where they call home.



Josh Ray takes a short break in front of the "Che" Guevara memorial statue.

Dr. John Couper



# FIGHTING BANDIDOS

Story and Photo by Mandi Steele

## Museum focuses on a group of Cuban-Americans who fought communism.

In Trinidad, one of the most famous places to visit is the Museo Nacional de la Lucha contra Bandidos or "Museum of the Struggle against Bandits."

Here is where one can read about the start of Fidel Castro's revolution and ongoing battle against those who don't want him in power.

This group of people fought Castro's new government for six years in the mountains north of Trinidad. They were labeled *bandidos* and were composed of Cuban-Americans who wanted to eliminate Castro. It is thought that the CIA was backing them in their struggle against the revolutionaries.

The museum doesn't pretend to be unbiased, highlighting Fidel Castro and other revolutionaries as heroes and labeling the *bandidos* as heartless, murderous rebels. Although Castro and other men who fought for his same purpose have their photographs and names spread throughout the museum, it's not possible to find a name or photograph introducing any of the *bandidos*.

"They were terrorists," said Roberto Manso, museum guide.

He said the bandits would beat up farmers to get the supplies they needed and assassinate anyone who was pro-Castro.

The museum outlines the history behind the fight between the *bandidos* and Castro's government, also including a brief history of Castro's takeover.

In 1898, the United States helped Cuba gain independence from Spain. The United



Roberto Manso explains how this truck was used by Castro's forces to fight the *bandidos*.

States had the main government influence in Cuba until Fulgencio Batista seized power in 1952 and ruled as dictator.

Manso said the rule under Batista was appalling. Castro intended to change the situation of his country and promised to improve the literacy rate. In 1959, Castro took over control of the country, but not without problems in the Trinidad area from the *bandidos*.

The *bandidos* would bring food, supplies and artillery over to Cuba from Miami, Manso said.

Manso said of the 4,000 *bandidos* that

fought against the state military and *campesinos*, pro-Castro farmers, 900 were killed, and the rest fled the country, many to the United States.

The force was totally wiped out by 1965, he said.

The museum that now houses the history of the *bandidos* used to be an 18th century convent and church. It was also used as a school and as quarters for the Spanish army.

After being destroyed in the early 1900s, the tower is the only part of the museum that is part of the original structure.



# One Last Battle

Story and Photo by Philip Martin

## Father leaves war against UNITA to unite with spouse, children.

Deep in the forests of Angola, a battle was brewing.

Captain Diogenes Mencio was leading 100 soldiers through the forest without an idea of where he was going.

"It was a terrible forest," Mencio said. "It was so thick you couldn't see the sun."

Mencio was the captain of a Special Forces unit of the Cuban Army. During the advance, only 18 of his soldiers were killed. He wasn't even wounded.

In the 1970s, Cuba had started sending soldiers to Third World countries, including Angola, where they were fighting against anti-Socialist armies in an attempt to export the revolution and keep a socialist hold on Third World countries.

Mencio said Angola asked Cuba to help liberate the country from the National Union for the Total Independence of Angola. Cuban President Fidel Castro asked for volunteers to go to help Angola.

Mencio was born in Santiago in 1939. At the age of 17 he joined the army. When the revolution started, he joined Castro in the fight.

"I helped in the fight against Batista," he said. "I'm a strong member of the Cuban Communist Party."

When his country asked for volunteers to fight in Angola, Mencio quickly volunteered.

"It was important to go to Africa — I served Cuba by going to Angola," Mencio said.

"It was an ideological issue of saving the Angolan people from UNITA."

Mencio remembered UNITA was hard to fight because they were "very vicious and used guerrilla tactics."

He was in Angola two different times between 1970 and 1979 for a total of two years.

Jonas Savimbi, who was trying to claim control of Angola after the country received their independence from Portugal in 1975, was the leader of UNITA.

More than 377,000 Cuban soldiers



Diogenes Mencio, seated on the right, fought in Angola during the 1970s. After spending his time in Angola, Mencio returned to Santiago to raise his family.

were cycled through Angola.

The last of the troops came home in 1991.

At the same time Cuba was sending soldiers to Angola, France and the United States were sending soldiers in support of UNITA.

Mencio fought against both countries during his time in Angola.

"The Cuban troops were very strong," he said.

"The French and U.S. troops were not strong."

During his time in Angola, Mencio was never wounded.

"I was going between different provinces in Angola," he said. "I was mainly in the Cabinda Province."

He was stationed in the Cabinda Province to protect the supply of oil there.

Mencio is a member of the Mambí fighters. The Mambí fighters were a group of freed slaves who fought against the Spanish in Cuba's War for Independence.

"Being a member of the Mambí fighters,

I have special influence," he said.

The influences include being able to house tourists in his house without a license.

After the war in Angola, Mencio came home to raise his family. Mencio has three sons and two daughters. His oldest son, Guillermo, is a lieutenant colonel in the army. Mencio hopes if Cuba asks for volunteers, that his youngest son would oblige.

"If something similar happens, I would want Lazaro to go," he said. "The Cuban people will go."

Mencio is now retired and spends his time listening to the radio.

He is not able to watch television, because he lost his sight at his job four years ago.

He believes there is a possibility for a peaceful world.

"My soul is united with people of other countries," he said.

"A better world is possible through the union of all people."



# Hasta la Victoria Siempre

Story and Photos  
by Philip Martin



Julio Guerra holds a faded picture of his old friend and commander Ernesto Guevara.

## Retired soldier remembers fighting alongside revolutionary hero.

On a cool December day, Ernesto “Che” Guevara stood with his troops awaiting a train.

The train was carrying a load of munitions and soldiers from Havana heading to the Oriente Province in southern Cuba.

As the train approached, Guevara shouted out orders atop of a bulldozer just before he parked it on the track causing the train to derail.

Among those taking orders was 23-year-old Julio Guerra.

“Che never used harsh words with his troops,” Guerra said. “We would have seen the sun rise for him.”

As the train approached, his troops were positioned along the tracks and throughout the town. They were armed with Colt .45-caliber revolvers, rifles and Molotov cocktails. As the train approached the bulldozer, the train shifted into reverse, toppling onto a private car housing the soldiers.

Guevara gave the orders for the rebels to rush the train with the volatile cocktails and to open fire on anyone who escaped.

“The train battle was a difficult one,” he said. “Che had small soldiers, but we moved fast when he gave us orders.”

Soon the car became like an oven and the soldiers gave themselves up. The rebels took 27 prisoners, giving 10 to the police who then tortured the prisoners. The 10 were sentenced by a mil-

itary tribunal and executed for war crimes. Seventeen prisoners had nothing to do with the government. They were in the wrong place at the wrong time.

One year before the battle, Guerra was getting out of jail when he found out his mom had gone insane. In 1957, Guerra was arrested two times by President Fulgenico Batista’s police. The first time he was arrested was in February. After his arrest, his

mother was hospitalized for distress. During his arrest, Guerra was tortured and had a tooth pulled out. Guerra would not talk.

After his release, his mother checked out of the hospital. Then in October of the same year he was arrested again.

“During my second arrest, my mother went insane and she died that way,” Guerra said.

During his second torture, his genitals were squeezed. He later found out he would not be able to have children.

When he was released from jail, he learned of his mother’s condition and was saddened. Still he decided to fight, blaming Batista for his mother’s condition.

One year later, he was standing atop a cathedral after the train battle trying to shoot down a plane. He was armed with a 15-mm machine gun. Standing next to him was another rebel fighter. The plane was making bombing runs on the city. Guerra said he saw

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*“Che never used harsh  
words with his troops.  
We would have seen the  
sun rise for him.”*

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one bomb hit close to his position.

"As the bomb hit, I saw water fly up because it had hit a well," he said. "The force of the impact knocked me and the guy next to me on our backs."

After the plane was shot down, the rebels knew there was one more card to be played.

"We went out into the streets and cheered, we never thought we would be free so early," he said.

On January 1, 1959, Batista fled the country, handing power over to civilian-military junta — led by General Eulogio Cantillo. The next day Guevara headed to Havana. Guevara gave the soldiers time to think about fighting for a leader who had already left the country.

The soldiers surrendered.

By 5 a.m. on January 3, Guevara and his

men were having breakfast at La Cavannia. Camilo Cienfuegos joined Guevara in Havana and later that day Fidel Castro began his legendary five-day march to Havana from Santiago.

Guerra was promoted to Sergeant by Guevara himself, but never advanced past the rank.

"To advance I would have had to join the Cuban Communist Party," he said. "I never joined, because I like women and rum too much."

After the revolution was triumphant, the army had a new adversary: other revolutionary groups intent on taking over the government.

"My unit was sent with orders to shoot the bandidos," he said. "I did not participate in the hunting of the bandidos."

He said the rebels were fast and hard to

catch because they knew the mountains of Sierra del Escambray and were getting support from the people of Trinidad. The battles against the bandidos lasted until 1965.

By that time, Guevara had severed ties with Cuba and fought in the Congo with the Kinshasa rebels. His plot to help the rebels win the revolution was a failure. Guevara reemerged in Bolivia in 1966 where he attempted to rouse the Bolivian peasantry to revolution.

He failed.

Guerra's boss was with Che's guerrilla fighters, Alberto Fernandez de Oca.

On October 9, 1967, Guevara and his rebels, including Oca, were ambushed and executed. Later that month, all of Cuba had heard the news.

Guerra, his army friend, Jorge Fontella,





and the whole country was saddened by the news.

"We felt like we had lost a close friend," he said.

On the eve of the 30th anniversary of Guevara's execution, a race started to retrieve his remains. Cuba won the race, uncovering Guevara and six other guerrilla fighters. Guerra remembers when the plane carrying the body of his former leader landed.

"As the plane landed, people lined the runway," he said. "As his body was transported from Havana to Santa Clara, people lined the road. People watched as the body was transported to his last resting spot."

At the burial of Guevara, Castro and other leaders made speeches.

Guerra did not make a speech, but he was in attendance along with Fontella and other soldiers who fought with Guevara.

"Che was a man, he was a real humanitarian," he said. "Everyone wanted to be with Che."



Ernesto "Che" Guevara (top) used a bulldozer (left) to derail a train (above) carrying munitions and soldiers to the Oriente Province. After he claimed victory in Santa Clara, Guevara took his troops to Havana along with Camilo Cienfuegos to claim victory for the Revolution.



# Drop Embargo

Column by Mandi Steele

## Americans should view Cubans as friends, not foes.

When someone mentions Cuba, the word communist always seems to go right along with it.

Before spending 10 days in the country infamous for its controversial form of government, I, too, was apprehensive about what type of conditions I might find upon my arrival. After all, isn't Cuba labeled as an oppressive, evil, scary country that people should be afraid to travel to?

I'm not sure what other people envision when they think of Cuba. Perhaps they think of hundreds of communist soldiers with machine guns at every turn, but obviously this isn't the case. But, I think people must envision something terrifying about Cuba, because every time I tell people that I went there, their expression is priceless.

"How was it?" As if they expect me to say it was dreadful and horrifying.

They seem even more surprised when I answer with, "It was wonderful."

"Really?"

I decided I better start telling people, "It isn't as bad as people think it is."

The country is beautiful, the people seem to live contently and Cuba is honestly a great place to visit. No, there aren't hundreds of communist soldiers at every corner. No, every Cuban is not starving from government cruelty. And not every Cuban is dying to swim over to the coast of Florida.

But, as with anywhere, Cuba isn't without its problems. Cubans are paid low wages by the government and don't know very many conveniences that we like to call necessities. For the most part, they aren't allowed to travel out of the country and can't ever really "own" anything because the state owns it all. With rationing, there are times when certain supplies are hard to find.

I'm of the opinion that communism is a very bad and oppressive form of government. It's hard to say it's not oppressive when the government takes so much of the money and seems to give so little of it back to the people. Doesn't the communist propaganda teach that all the money is to be shared? I didn't see much of it being shared. In fact, I couldn't figure out where it all went. The buildings in Cuba are in sorry condition, hardly any new construction is going on and the stores aren't exactly what you would call filled with merchandise.

The point I'm trying to come to in a sort of round-about way is that I think the United States should change its view toward Cuba as an enemy and drop the embargo. Cuba has its problems, and its government is the main one, but that doesn't mean the country itself is an enemy.

Cubans are some of the friendliest people I've ever met. Why

should the Cubans have to suffer by an embargo the United States has put in place simply because their leaders are corrupt? If you think about it, probably 99 percent of the world's leaders are corrupt. If we dropped the embargo, can you imagine the communist lifestyle lasting when the Cubans see such a wealth of free-enterprise coming into their country?

I think we could be so much more to the Cubans by trading with them and bringing some of our business, tourists and way of life over to their shores than by refusing to have anything to do with them.



From left to right, Mandi Steele, Josh Ray, Jerry Manter and Philip Martin visit the Castillo de la Real Fuerza fortress in Havana.

Dr. John Couper



# Dancing the Night Away

Story by Josh Ray, Photos by Philip Martin



Clubbers in Trinidad flock to La Ayala (The Cave) for the opportunity of unlimited drinks and a bout of cave dancing.

## From clubs to caves, Cubans love to dance, if they can afford it.

Built in a cave under a hill, the club La Ayala is a one-of-a-kind place to party.

La Ayala first opened in 1996. The club plays a variety of music, ranging from salsa to romantic and rock music. A \$10 cover charge is required. Once inside the club, drinks are free. Persons must be 17 or older to enter into the club and to drink.

Diego Garcia, a game room operator and DJ at the Las Cuevas hotel that owns the club, said many clubs throughout the country have the same setup, where people pay a cover charge and then do not have to pay for any drinks throughout the night.

He worked as the DJ for the club from

the time it opened until 2000. Now he only DJs on special occasions, such as when the current DJ needs time off or for holidays.

Most Cuban people cannot go to the clubs. Eldris Diaz, a resident of Santiago, said the average person does not make enough money during the month to pay the cover charge.

The minimum price for most of the "discos" is \$3. This is about half of what the majority of Cubans make in a month.

"Three dollars is for the people who have money," he said.

The cover charge would allow the person into the club and cover one free Cuba

Libre (a rum and cola).

Diaz said instead of going to the clubs, people find other ways of having fun. In Santiago, there is a square in the center of town where people hang out during the evenings.

"Every night, people come here to the center to meet other people," he said.

Instead of going to the clubs to dance, he said most of the people will just hang out with their friends and drink. It is cheaper for them.

Diaz said most people would rather pay with pesos to enter the club, because that is what many of them are paid in. If a person wants to go to the club and pay with pesos though, they have to wait until a certain Monday of the month.

Diaz said \$3 clubs are made for the tourists because they are more comfortable and "nice for dancing."

Delvis Rodriguez, a resident of Santiago, attends school for 11 straight days.

When he has a day off, he said he just wants to spend the time with his friends and family. Instead of going to the clubs, he and his friends go to the movies or hang out.

No matter where the people go, Rodriguez said salsa music is the "most popular for the group."



The Cuban disco La Ayala is built in a cave in Trinidad. The cost is \$10 per person.



# The World Of Drink

Cubans drink it straight, not mixed.

Story by Josh Ray

**W**ith the introduction of sugar cane by Christopher Columbus in 1493, one of Cuba's most popular products was born.

Cubans still use the same raw material, molasses, to make the rum as they did when the sugar cane was first brought to the country. They also still use the same basic process to make it.

Monica Perez, a tour guide at the Havana Club rum museum in Havana, said the original sugar cane came from India. When it was brought to Cuba, it thrived in the climate of the country, helped along by slavery.

"In spite of the fact that slavery was a very tragic event, it played an important part in the beginning of the rum industry," Perez said.

With the help of the slaves and the rail-

roads, the Cuban sugar cane (as it is now called) became a big industry in Cuba. Soon, they discovered how to crush the cane, extract the juice and make molasses — the key ingredient in the rum.

"The best rum comes from the same sugar cane that produces molasses," Perez said.

While the development of machines in 1820 was a turning point in Cuban history, she said the original ways of making the rum were kept.

"This is why our rum is famous all over the world," Perez said.

Upon making the rum, it is then placed into American white oak casks that have been used for manufacturing bourbon. It is then aged anywhere from 18 months to 15 years.

Marvin Pena Hidalgo, a bartender at the Fabrica Ron Caney rum factory in Santiago,



A bartender in Club 300 pours a "round on the house" of *Cuba Libres*, or rum and cokes.

Mandi Steele



said the rum aged 18 months is called Silver Dry and is used to make cocktails.

Perez said the cocktails were not started until tourists began coming to Cuba.

The rums aged more than 18 months are meant to be drunk straight.

"Here we like to drink the rum alone — no ice, no cola, only rum," Hidalgo said.

While there are numerous brands of rum made in Cuba, Havana Club is the single brand that is exported. Havana Club brand was started in 1878. At \$85 per bottle, Havana Club 15 Years is the most expensive in the country. But, most younger, lesser quality rums run under \$10 per bottle.

Perez said while other countries might make rum, Cuba boasts the best rum.

"Cuban rum is universally known," she said. "No rum is equal or similar to Cuban, no matter the location."

The Fabrica Ron Caney was originally owned by Bacardi and was the first Bacardi factory in Cuba. After some problems, Bacardi pulled out. Now the factory makes numerous types of rum, including Havana Club, Caribbean Club and Caribe Palma. They bottle 450 bottles from barrels a day.



Monica Perez hands out free samples of rum in the Havana Club rum museum.



The rum is aged over time in American white oak casks, which were also used for bourbon.

## Beer, cocktails prove worth in Cuban bar scenes.

Story by Mandi Steele

With several mint leaves floating in between the ice and plenty of rum, the *mojito* is known as one of the most popular alcoholic beverages in Cuba — especially for the tourists.

Although, most Cubans will admit to the fact that most any drink with rum in it is popular. Rum and cola, or what's known as a *Cuba Libre*, can be found at almost any bar, not to mention rum daiquiris, rum and collins and pina coladas.

Cubans also have two main beers that are almost always available: Cristal and Bucanero.

Cristal is a lighter beer and Bucanero a darker beer. Advertisements for Cristal are commonplace in Cuban society, much like Coca-Cola ads are in the United States.

Matias Rodriguez, a waiter at the bar inside Hotel Inglaterra, said the price of alcohol varies greatly depending on where it's purchased. He said a Cristal can be purchased for 85 cents at a local market, but may go up to \$4 at a good disco tech.

Bars are popular hangouts all over Cuba, Rodriguez said.

Although many bars are geared toward tourists, there are still many bars available to Cubans.

"A lot of people drink in peso bars," Rodriguez said.

Because dollars are of higher value than the peso, buying alcohol with pesos is less expensive for people. Rodriguez said the Chochinito and the Castillo Hawa are a

couple of the popular peso bars in Havana.

Gertrudis Pagán Reyes works at Club 300, a bar in Santiago that she said is busy almost all the time.

She's worked there for five years and agrees with Rodriguez about the popularity of rum drinks.

At Club 300, she makes many *mojitos* and *gaipirinas* for her customers.

A *gaipirina* is a cocktail made of rum, lemon, mineral water and ice.

Cubans make a *mojito* by mixing rum to mint leaves, sugar, mineral water and ice. Rodriguez said many Cubans will drink rum straight with maybe a little bit of ice, but beer is the big drink.

"The Cuban people prefer the beer, because of the hot climate," he said.

The relaxed outlook of alcohol among the Cuban people can be seen by the drinking age, which is 16.

"It's very young to drink at 16 years," Rodriguez said.

Alcohol is also made readily available, being offered in almost any type of restaurant, grocery store, fast food outlet or gas station. Tourists have access to the variety of alcoholic beverages available with many bars located near tourist attractions, hotels and rum museums for them to visit.

Whether they drink alcohol in their own homes, a peso bar or a dollar bar, Cubans seem to take pride in the popularity of their rum and beers with the tourists, not forgetting to kick back a cold one for themselves.



# Going Out by Night

Story and Photo by Jerry Manter



Tania Miranda is a soap opera actress in Cuba. She's acted most of her life and is recognized frequently.

Tania Miranda has spent most of her life under the lights of television.

It's the same story every night.

On any given evening, thousands of Cubans can be found glued to the television. Some maybe watching the news.

Best bet, however, they're watching soap operas.

"It's when everybody watches television," said Tania Miranda, a Cuban soap opera actress. "There aren't that many options."

Miranda is one of the most recognizable faces in Cuba. Miranda's been acting since she was a child. Today, she's a lead actress in "Salir de Noche," or "Going Out by Night." Miranda plays a seamstress,

Gardenia, at the House of Gardenia, a company that makes clothing that's always following the latest fashions.

Not a typical soap story line in the states, but Cubans can't get enough.

"I play a character that is weak but strong at the same time," Miranda said.

The hour-long program runs from 9-10 p.m. on weeknights. While most followers are fans of the show, many Cubans don't have a choice in programs with three channels throughout the island.

Her character has undergone many changes while developing on the show. She is heavily involved in the business, finds a lot of disputes with employers and falls in love with Roberto, a friend who doesn't know. Her mother is ill, she's always ready to make a dollar to help herself and her son get by.

"Many people, men, women and children, appreciate my character," Miranda said.

Miranda is a rarity in Cuba. She's able to make a very good liv-

ing compared to an average Cuban family. She has celebrity status everywhere she goes.

It's a little overwhelming at times, but she appreciates everything her profession has given her.

"A lot of people recognize me," she said.

Faustino Abreu, a Havana resident, is a big fan of Miranda.

"She's a good actress and she's very beautiful," Abreu said.

Abreu met Miranda at a local resort hotel outside of Santa Clara. The two danced to Salsa music by the pool.

Meeting a celebrity, let alone dancing

with one, is something Abreu will remember forever.

"It was very satisfying meeting a famous person," Abreu said.

Abreu was gracious to Miranda and did not want to push her like most Cubans do. Although it was hard, he thought it would be best not to ask for her autograph.

Abreu is a veteran when it comes to soap opera loyalty. He's been watching the shows for 30 years.

"They reflect real Cuban life," he said.

When she's not taping "Salir de Noche," Miranda plans to begin working on her next project — a series of three radio soaps. One of them will be about family life with a handicapped child and how she struggles to get by.

"In the story, I can't deal with the child," she said.

Miranda knows she's lucky to have such a good job. She's financially secure, unlike most Cubans. She's known her entire life how promising it's been to be an actress.

"I never thought I would be famous," she said. "I'm very proud to do this work."

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*"I never thought  
I would be famous."*

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# Give Me the Beat

Story and Photos by Josh Ray

## Cuban band leader dreams of playing tres in the states.

His nickname is Coto, and one of his biggest dreams is to play the tres in the United States.

The tres is an instrument that is native to Cuba. While virtually similar to the guitar, the tres has three strings and is tuned to an open "C." Juan de la Cruz Antomarchi Padilla (Coto) has been playing the instrument for 13 years.

Aside from playing solo, Coto has played in his band *Coto el Diamante Negro y Su Eco del Caribe* for the past six years.

During his time as a musician, he has played in numerous countries, including Holland, Switzerland and France. Coto calls himself "very instrumental" because he can also play the bass and conga and sing.

The 13 years of playing have earned him a reputation in the United States.

Jacob Plasse, a marketing major at a university in the United States, has been playing the tres for two years. While in school, Plasse studied the instrument and fell in love with it. To further his knowledge of it he sought out Nelson Gonzalez, whom Plasse described as the "most famous tres player in the U.S."

"He'd be playing in one of the cafes and he wouldn't need a band," Plasse said.

When Plasse went to Gonzalez for instructions, the famous tres player recommended Coto to Plasse.

In January, the student traveled to Cuba to study the tres under the instruction of Coto.

"Tres players are like 5,000 times better down here in Cuba than they are in the states," Plasse said. "He's brought the tres back up to a level."

Coto said he enjoyed teaching Plasse. He hopes Plasse will take what he learned in Cuba back to the other tres players in the states. He is very happy to share his knowledge of the instrument with other people.

"I feel very proud when people recommend tres players to me," Coto said.

He loves "everything" about being in a band.

Coto said while he makes "enough" money as a musician, playing in bands is more than a living.

He said playing the music "carries all the important things" for him and his band members, "like their hearts and their minds."

Plasse said playing the tres is a family tradition for Coto. Coto's daughter also sings in his band.

Upon returning to the states, Plasse said he hoped to play salsa and start a band. He left Cuba to return on June 26.

Coto said he is going to play 22 concerts in America during November.



Coto plays the tres and sings in his band, while Julie, his daughter, sometimes sings for the band as well.



Coto's band practices in a defense of the revolution building in Havana. The band plays in local clubs.



# Smokin' a Cuban

Story by Josh Ray



World's most popular cigars undergo hours of careful production.

One hundred workers start the day at 7:30 a.m. to produce 20,000 cigars for exporting in the Partagas factory in Havana.

They do it all by hand, too.

Starting in the wetting room, the cigar goes through numerous steps to become the high quality item Cuba has become famous for. In the room, the workers open, count and separate the tobacco leaves before washing them.

After washing the leaves, they are stripped and chopped. Upon being stripped, each leaf is separated according to color and brand of tobacco leaf.

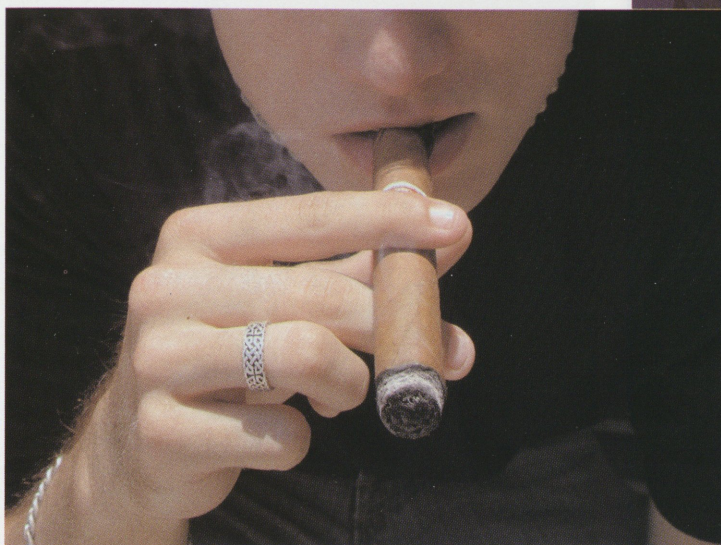
The sorted leaves are then sent to the blending room where the workers deal with the fillers, or the leaves used inside the cigar. The fillers are classified by four variables, combustibility, aroma, binder and strength. After the leaves are checked for all four, they are sent to the next floor of the factory where the actual cigars are made.

Each worker spends the day rolling one type of cigar.

Jose Cajigal Miller, tour guide at the factory, said the







(Above) The author takes a moment to enjoy a Cuban cigar. (Right) A Cuban cigar worker sorts and rolls tobacco in a Havana cigar factory.



Josh Ray

fastest person can roll 250 cigars per day. How much a person rolls, though, depends on the size of the cigars being made. Workers rolling bigger cigars will roll less in a day than those rolling small ones.

In the rolling room, the cigars go through three steps. The first step is the actual production of the cigar. The workers roll the inside of the cigar using different types of leaf. They then place it on a press for 15 to 20 minutes to pack the tobacco together. The third step is to roll the wrapper onto the cigar and use a natural Canadian glue as an adhesive.

Before the cigars are wrapped, though, they must be taken to a station where the draw texture of the cigar is checked. When smoked, the cigar cannot draw too much or too little smoke.

If the worker finds the cigars are drawing too much or not

enough, they are sent back to the worker who made them to be redone.

"They should not be too tight and not too loose," Miller said.

Workers on the rolling floor are not without entertainment for the whole day. People are employed to sit at the front of the room and read the newspaper to the workers in the morning and novels in the afternoon.

Miller said when a new type of cigar is made, workers will often use the name of a novel for the brand name on the cigar. The newest brand, La Gloria Cubana, is around five years old.

When a worker finishes wrapping a certain number of cigars, they are sent to quality control. The cigars are wrapped in a bundle with a band which has the worker's number on it. The quality control







(Above) A factory worker rolls a cigar for visitors to see in the Partagas factory store.

(Right) The cigars are put on a press for 15-20 minutes before the wrapper can be rolled.



worker checks for tightness, holes and size. For the workers who make mistakes often in their rolling, quality control smokes a cigar from the bundle to ensure perfect quality. If the worker finds a defect, the bundle is sent back to the roller to remake.

After the cigars are completely made, they must be sorted and classified. Each cigar is categorized by color — darkness and lightness. Six types of colors and 72 tones are used in the classification process.

After each cigar has been classified, it must be banded with the brand name of the cigar. Each bander puts 2,300 bands on per day. Miller said each band must be straight and the same distance from the end.

After being branded, the cigars are boxed in Canadian cedar wood boxes made in Havana. Miller said cedar is used because it helps keep the aroma of the cigars.

He said it isn't easy to work in the cigar factory. Each potential worker has to go through a nine-month course, where they are trained for one specific job. If they ever chose to switch jobs, they must go through another course for nine months for the new job. They are paid 80 pesos per month for the course.

"Each worker works their entire career in one job," Miller said.

Upon finishing the course, he said each worker will make between 300 to 400 pesos per month, with 6 percent of their salary paid in American dollars.

While there are many different brands made in the factory, The Partagas, at 155 years old, is one of the oldest in Cuba.

Carlos Dominguez, a Santiago resident, said cigars

Josh Ray

Jerry Mantner





Jerry Manter

Cigar factory workers demonstrate how to roll cigars for the customers.



Josh Ray

The Partagas cigar factory also serves as a store for people to buy cigars.

are such a big part of Cuban culture because of the quality.

"Cuba is famous for having the best-tasting cigar tobacco in the world," Dominguez said.

His daughter, Adita Dominguez, said the significance of cigars in the culture is changing. While Cubans used to be able to smoke anywhere, including in hospitals and airports, smoking is now prohibited in some places. She said the danger of smoking cigars is not really the cause of this.

"People are smoking less because of the high price," she said. "Cigars cost a lot of money. It is the main cause of death in developed countries, too."

She said many people did smoke cigars because it was dangerous to them.

"It isn't the pleasure of cigars, it's the danger," Dominguez said. "It's part of the Cuban culture."

Miller said last year 45 cigar factories were shut down. Today, there are five working factories in Cuba.

He said the most popular brands made are Cohiba and Montecristo.


"Fidel enjoyed Cohiba," Miller said.

VEGAS  
**ROBAINA**

1. Tobacco leaves are opened, counted, and separated then washed.
2. Leaves are stripped, chopped and separated into categories by color and brand.
3. Leaves are sent to the rolling room.
4. Filler is rolled, then pressed for 15 to 20 minutes and sent to a station to be checked
5. The wrapper is rolled onto the cigar and sent to quality control for testing.
6. The cigars are sent to be bundled and packed for shipping.

HABANA CUBA  
Cuchillas de Barbacoa, San Luis





# Better to Burn

Story & Photos by Josh Ray

Cubans combat high-dollar music industry by illegally burning their own CDs.

One company runs the whole music industry, and they do not market for Cuba.

EGREM is the government run music company. They own all the music stores, choose which cds will or will not be sold in the stores, set the prices on CDs and record the artists. Pedro Juan Tartabull, also known as Johny D.J., said the government sets the prices too high for the Cuban people to buy. So he found one solution to the problem.

Tartabull works as a DJ at the market in Havana. The government pays him about \$7 a month to play music for the crowds, and he loves his job.

"I like seeing the people rejoice," he said.

But that is not enough. With a child at home, the government salary does not cut it for Tartabull.

"It's very hard to survive because I work for pesos and the world uses dollars," he said. "Pesos are useless."

So he sells music on the black market.

With a friend who works in EGREM, Tartabull has access to the recording studios. With his friends' help, he sneaks into the studios, prints the covers of the musicians' albums and burns the CDs. By doing this, he can sell the CD for a third of what the government will. The government usually prices the CDs at \$25 a piece.

He has illegally burned thousands of CDs to sell. Because the government will not market international artists, Tartabull can only sell the burned CDs of Cuban artists. He said the government only markets Cuban artists and has one music company so that it can keep it all within the country.

Jose Duharte, a student in Santiago, found a way around that obstacle, plus an even cheaper method of getting music.

Duharte pays \$1 for a blank CD and then goes to one of his friends who has the Internet and downloads songs. They loan





him an already burned CD, and he burns it on his own computer. He said this is a common practice among Cubans.

"A lot of people burn their own CDs," he said. "I always buy burned. It's cheaper."

This also allows people to get international music.

While the burning of CDs is illegal in Cuba, Duharte said it is not a big deal. The police do not usually investigate it.

"They are not too strict," he said. "If they hear something (a tip), then they investigate. If they don't hear anything, they don't go after that. They are not searching houses or anything like that."

If someone is caught burning CDs illegally, the first time they just receive a warning and have to show their papers on the computer. The second or third time the computer will be confiscated.

Police do investigate people illegally using the Internet. Duharte said no common person in Cuba can use the Internet legally. The only people who can have it are those who need it for their careers. People will find a friend who has the Internet legally, attain access and connect through the phone lines.

"The government goes after that," he said. "People don't pay anything for that. The state pays for that."

Why are there music stores if the Cuban people cannot buy CDs?

Norma Ruiz Martinez, an employee who works in one of EGREM's stores in Santiago, said CDs are marketed for tourists. She said January, March and April are the store's busiest times because of the high tourist season.

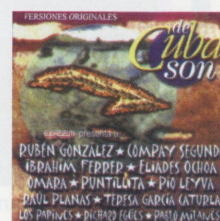
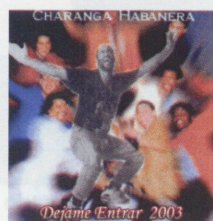
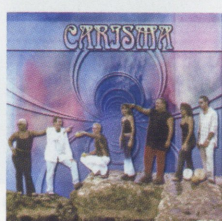
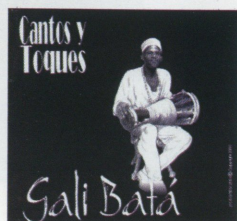
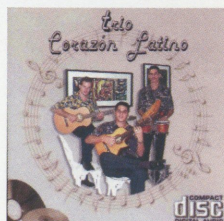
Cubans can buy more CDs at that time due to the influx of tourist dollars, but they still do not come to the shops to buy most of the time.

"The Cuban people come to see, to listen, but not to buy," Martinez said.

She said all of the EGREM stores throughout Cuba carry the same number of CDs (far less than an American CD store), as well as the same selection of music.



Johny D. J. plays music for the crowds in the market. He works on a government salary, and to make more money, he illegally burns and sells CDs on the black market.





# Cuba...



Mandi Steele

The Capitol building doesn't house a branch of the government like it does in the United States. Instead, it's a spot for visitors to tour for a small fee.



Mandi Steele



In a bar at the Havana Club rum museum, a trio plays for tips as tourists sip their rum cocktails.



# A Look Inside



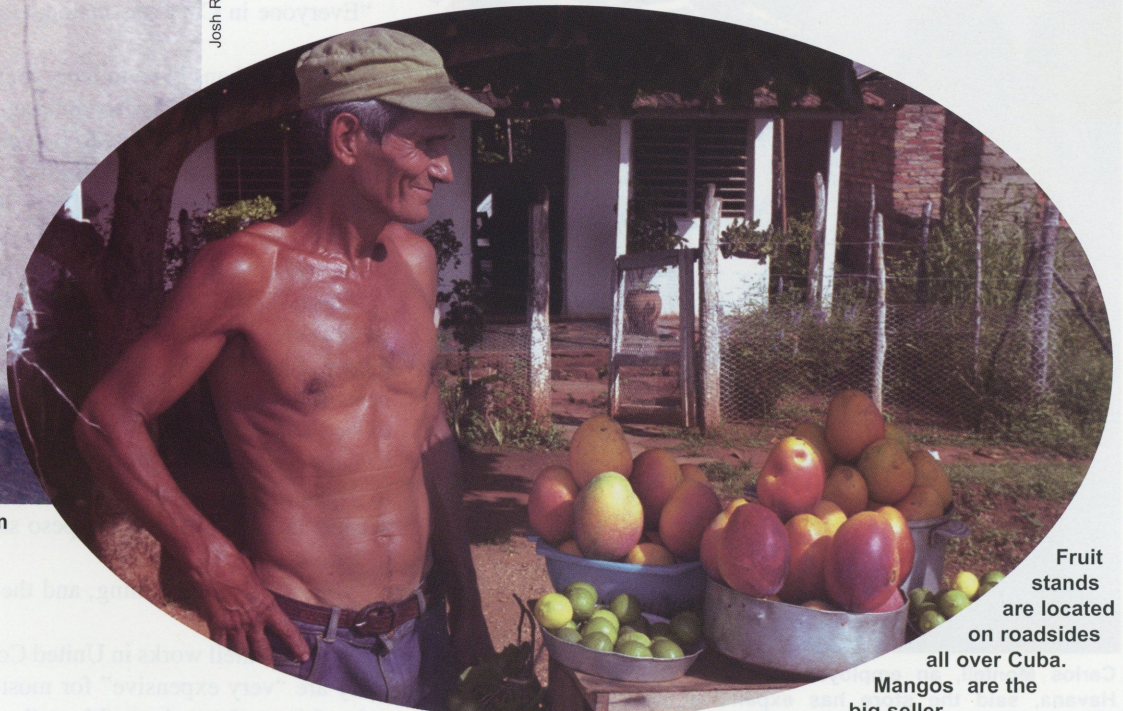
A bashful child peeks out from behind the door of his home in Santiago.

Josh Ray



Mandi Steele

Two fishermen clean fish they caught in the ocean outside of Santiago.



Fruit stands are located on roadsides all over Cuba. Mangos are the big seller.

Jerry Manter





# Getting Your Peso's Worth

Story and Photos  
by Mandi Steele

## Cubans on tight budget still seek styles similar to other countries.

When it comes to clothes shopping in Cuba, there are a couple different ways to go about it.

Because most Cubans don't receive high wages, money for clothing can be difficult to come up with. Unlike America, there aren't big malls in every city, a Wal-Mart on every other block

and a wide variety of clothing stores to choose from. Almost every clothing store that can be found is small and has a slim selection.

From these small clothing stores, Cubans can choose to buy from a store that accepts dollars or a store that accepts Cuban pesos, the national currency. If they choose a peso store, their selection is even more minimized.

Maritze Pérez has worked in a peso clothing store in Santa Clara for six years. There isn't much to see inside. There are a few shelves of new jeans and a few shelves of used clothing. The prices are all marked in pesos. Jeans are 160 pesos, which is about \$6.

"Everyone in Cuba has national currency as a salary," Maritze said.

She said Cubans have to have some place to spend their pesos, so that's why there are peso clothing stores. These stores also help Cubans who cannot afford to buy clothes. Maritze said if a government social worker has decided someone is in need of financial help, the government will give them a check that can be used at a peso store to buy clothes for their family. It is socialism at work, trying to have everyone on the same financial plane.

"There are no social classes in Cuba," Maritze said.

However, Debora Foil is probably a class above many of her people. She is an English teacher and used to work in the tourist business. As she looks around United Colors of Benneton trying to find something that might appeal to her, she admits that most Cubans could never afford to buy anything in the store. The store in Havana is a chain store from an Italian company. It only accepts dollars. She said the peso stores available are something of a joke.

"You don't find anything, and the things you do find are very old," Foil said.

Carlos Montell works in United Colors. He said the clothes they carry are "very expensive" for most Cubans. To buy a T-shirt or pair of jeans from them, Montell said it would take a Cuban's



Carlos Montell, an employee at United Colors of Benneton in Havana, said the store has expensive clothes geared toward tourists, not the average Cuban.





Shoppers look over the selection at a clothing store in Havana. The store looks similar to a peso store, where there aren't many sizes or styles to choose from. Even many dollar stores, like this one, only have a few select items available for their customers.

whole salary for one year. The store is mainly for tourists and Cubans who have money, such as actors or singers, he said.

"Not every Cuban can come here," he said.

Montell and Foil said many Cubans purchase their clothes from abroad when family members send or bring them clothing from overseas. Because of the lack of money, Foil said there isn't a big variety in most Cubans' wardrobes. They may only own five pairs of clothing or less, she said.

Style and fashion isn't lacking, even if the Cubans can only afford five changes of clothing.

"The Cuban people like the good clothes, the good fashions," Montell said.

Some of the same styles that can be found in Europe and America are present in Cuba.

Foil said her people copy the styles they see on television and in magazines. They want to look just as fashionable as other countries.

In a shopping center in Havana called *Carlos Tercero*, or Charles III, one can see how the Cubans have kept up with styles. European name brands are present along with some other brands that aren't so well-known. The prices seem steep compared to the average wage, which becomes apparent when the dollar store is the only one people are standing in line to get into.





# Universal Healthcare

Story and Photo by Philip Martin

## Family Doctor Program provides basic needs for rural residents.

Universal healthcare is not a myth in Cuba.

The Cuban government provides the basic needs for people to survive. These include rationed food, low rent costs and affordable healthcare. The only part of the healthcare system Cubans have to pay for is the medicine. With the government controlling the medicine, prices are kept low so all can afford to be treated.

One of the ways Cubans stay healthy is by the Family Doctor Program.

In 1984, the Cuban government started the Family Doctor Program calling for 75,000 doctors and 20,000 nurses to provide primary care. There is a family doctor on every block and in every village.

The program has one doctor for every 170 persons. Some doctors take care of more than 170. One doctor is Omar Lorenzo, who takes care of 648 people in Havana. He graduated from medical school in 1990 with specialties in internal medicine, pediatrics and obstetrics.

"During my social service, I was isolated, but I felt fine," Lorenzo said.

A doctor having graduated from medical school serves a mandatory two years of social service for the government. Lorenzo served his two years in the area around Santa Clara where he said he was the first doctor there. Lorenzo said the "country people are happy for the care they receive."

Another part of becoming a doctor is serving in the military. Lorenzo said he did not serve in the military, although his school was part of the military service for three years.

The program provides a house for the doctor with a nurse where they see patients on the first floor of the house. All of the family doctor houses are painted white so the people will know.

Lorenzo spends his mornings as a consultant in a clinic with his

wife who is also a physician. In the afternoons, he makes house calls on some of his patients. If a patient has a problem during the night or on weekends, Lorenzo will be awakened. But, he is more than happy to help his patients.

"I like being a doctor," he said. "I help children and pregnant

women. Everyone is equal in the medical system."

Even the tourists are treated equally in the Cuban medical system. Marisal Alonzo, a pharmacist at the International Clinic in Trinidad, said if a tourist has a problem, they go to the clinic and the staff will treat the patient.

"The tourist

has to pay," she said. "If he has insurance, we charge the insurance company."

Because of the diplomatic strains with the United States, the clinics are allowed to treat U.S. citizens but can't charge their insurance companies. The international clinics have their medicine imported from other countries, so the tourists receive the best care they can get, said Terestita Dorta, the nurse at the clinic.

"Cubans are not allowed to be treated or receive medicine from an international clinic," Dorta said.

Lyno Hernandez, a doctor at a Santa Clara clinic, said he sees plenty of patients with diarrhea caused from stress, changes in climate, water or seafood.

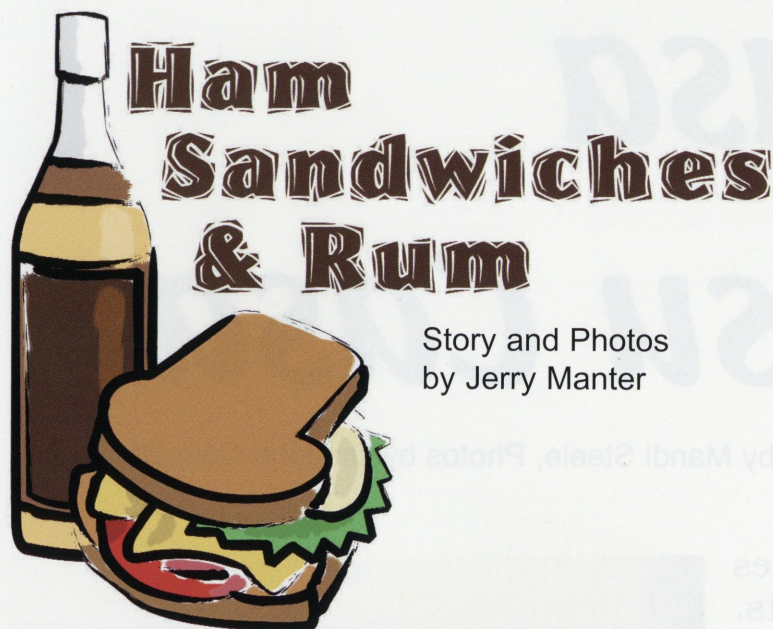
"The tourists are not used to it," Hernandez said. "They are eating in a private house where it's not sanitary or just overeating."

He said if there is a need for the tourist to be hospitalized, there is a hospital in Havana specifically for tourists. The clinic can get in touch with the insurance company and send the tourists back to their country of origin.



Pharmacist Marisal Alonzo said international clinics charge the medicine to insurance companies.





Story and Photos  
by Jerry Manter

## Cuban restaurants make conscious effort to serve Americanized food.

Although Cuba is infamous for its hand-made cigars and aged-to-perfection rum, the island is also well known for its unique restaurants and fresh food.

But while Cubans are leaders in Caribbean dishes, most restaurants almost always cater to tourists and are run differently than most establishments in the United States.

"Americans are the best clients in the world," said Javier Estevez, bartender at El Bosquecito in midtown Havana.

Estevez has worked as a bartender at Bosquecito, a small restaurant hidden in shade by large trees, for more than six years. He enjoys bartending and spending time conversing with tourists. Before working at the restaurant, he first had to attend a government sanctioned tourist and restaurant institution for three years. It was tough work, but he learned to enjoy himself and knew in the long run it would benefit him and his career immensely.

"I learned to interact with tourists and clients," Estevez said.

Cubans working in the restaurant industry usually work long hours and make a few dollars a month. Estevez, on average, works five days a week. However, his normal shift is usually 9 a.m. to midnight. During the high tourist season, which usually runs November through March, it's not unusual for Estevez to work even more.

But he knows the restaurant can't survive without tourists.

"Almost 90 percent of our business depends

on tourists," he said.

All public restaurants are owned by the government. Tourists are oblivious to the state of control restaurants are in, but for those who work in the food industry, it's just another slice of life they're used to.

"The government can change the menus any



time they want," Estevez said.

Besides comfortable tourist restaurants, many Cubans take business to the road. While American highways have parks, picnic tables and clean places to stretch, Cubans are quick to offer food to tourists making a long journey on a Cuban highway. Pizza, grilled cheese sandwiches and mangos can be found at many rest stops.

These tiny establishments, however, are more affordable for locals.

"Our business is about half and half," said Roberto Torres, a worker at a food stand two hours east of Havana. "Most of our business comes from people passing by."

The stand, which has no name, serves



Javier Estevez, bartender at Bosquecito, mixes drinks for customers. Most drinks are made with rum.

sandwiches, soft drinks, fruit juice, coffee, water and rum.

Torres said, like restaurants in Havana, his establishment relies heavily on tourists, those of which who mainly travel from Canada, Germany, Spain, Italy and France.

Although most restaurants scattered through Cuba are public and run by strict government policies, privately owned restaurants are becoming more popular.

Olivia Rodriguez, owner of Las Gallegas in Santiago, said while her restaurant is dependent on tourists, it's hard to compare her privately owned business to that of a public one.

"We have more variety of products here," Rodriguez said. "We have better hygiene and better service because we are not run by the government."

Her meals consist of pork, beef, chicken, cucumber and tomato salad, rice, beverage and an ice cream dessert. The meals go for about \$10 per person.

Rodriguez enjoys her profession in the restaurant industry. She's worked with food for several years and doesn't plan to stop. Working in a restaurant also allows her to work on her English — something she knows will help her business continue prospering.

"English is very important," Rodriguez said. "It's the international language and most tourists speak English."



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# Mi Casa es su Casa

Story by Mandi Steele, Photos by Dr. John Couper

Cubans open their homes to use as bed, breakfasts.

Although it's impossible to find a Holiday Inn conveniently located every few miles around Cuba, Cubans have come up with a different system to house visitors to their country.

*Casa particulares* can be found almost as easily as a Holiday Inn or Motel 6 in the bigger cities of Cuba. They provide a bed and bathroom to their guests and sometimes even a meal.

Gisela Fuste Duharte found herself in the *casa* business in 1998, after she retired from working as the head bookkeeper of a large factory.

"I needed to look for some more money," she said.

Duharte made 325 pesos a month working at the factory, which is about \$15. She now rents out two rooms of her *casa* in Santiago to tourists. She lives on the first floor of her home, and the two rental rooms and bathrooms are upstairs.

She said she has tourists from all over the world that stay with her.

Italians make up the largest portion of her visitors, but she also sees a lot of Germans, Swiss, Polish and Spanish visitors.

She charges \$25 a night for one room in the high tourist season, which is January, February, December, July and August.

The \$25 a night is more than her old \$15 a month, but



Duharte said she doesn't get to keep most of it.

"The government thinks we are getting rich, but it's not true," she said.

Duharte has to pay \$200 a month to the government just to be allowed to rent the rooms. She also has to have a special license to legally rent rooms. Receiving the license isn't easy, Duharte said.

People who want a license to rent rooms have to send in a letter asking for one.

Then the government sends officials out to people's neighborhoods to check up on them, asking questions about their behavior, etc. If they pass the test, they are given the license only after paying an initial fee and







(Above) This symbol is posted on licensed *casas* so people know where to find rooms. (Right) David Diaz owns a *casa* in Havana he rents out to tourists. (Below) Diaz serves his guests breakfast in this dining room.



then a monthly fee every month afterward.

Duarte said she had to pay \$100 per room for the license. When she only made \$15 a month before, it was difficult for her to come up with \$200 to get her license.

She admits she was forced to rent out her rooms illegally, without a license, until she came up with enough money to rent the rooms legally.

Last year, Duarte said she made about \$4,250 from renting her *casa*, but this was before the state took its cut. After paying \$200 a month for the license fee, she's down to a \$1,850 profit.

Duarte offers her guests breakfast for an extra \$2 a day. To do this, she is required to pay \$60 a month for

that license and \$7 a month for the place she serves breakfast. Then she is required to pay a 10 percent tax on what she makes, again cutting her profit down. After all the state cuts, she ends up making around \$940 a year.

"You make business, but then they take it," she said.

David Diaz also runs a *casa particular*, but he is more cautious when it comes to discussing profits.

"It's better if we don't talk about it," he said.

Diaz knows that he could possibly get in trouble with the state for talking about losses due to state involvement.

He rents four rooms of his *casa* out to tourists for \$25 a night per room. He said his home, located in Havana, was handed

down to him by his father, and that's how he was able to afford such a large place by Cuban standards. Most of his guests are French, so Diaz has learned the language well. He said it is "100 percent" important to know the language of his visitors.

Besides his native language, Spanish, he also speaks English and is learning German.

Both Diaz and Duarte said it is hard to stay afloat during the slow tourist season.

Sometimes they don't even make enough to cover the monthly license fee.

"It's not the best business, but you can survive," Diaz said.

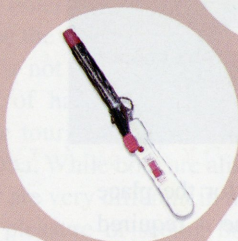


# C A S A \* P A R T I C U L A R



# Yadira's Beauty Salon

Story by Mandi Steele, Photo by Dr. John Couper



## Havana resident reaches for dream to own salon, make more money

Opening a small beauty parlor in her own home may not sound like much of a business venture to most people, but to Yadira Delgado Cruz, it would be a dream come true.

After working five years packaging vinegar in a factory, Cruz is more than overjoyed to switch to hair-dressing. However, starting any kind of business in Cuba, even a small beauty salon, has its challenges.

Businesses in Cuba aren't privately owned but owned by the state. Cruz will have to register with the government for a license before she ever starts snipping away for cash.

If she is allowed to receive a license, she will then have to pay a monthly fee to the state to keep her doors open.

The red tape isn't what has Cruz concerned. It's having the money to start things rolling that threatens her chance to become a stylist.

Cruz would love to be able to rent a small space in the city for her salon, but says she doesn't have enough money for that. Instead, she's decided to run her business out of her home. She lives in Havana, down an alley, on the first floor of what looks like an old, run-down apartment building.

Her space is confined and the top floor of her home (just one room) is in danger of falling apart. She's already bought the sand to make cement and fix the problem, but getting the money to fix the situation is another matter.

Cruz estimates her repairs will cost about \$200. After the top floor is fixed, she intends on opening her salon upstairs and herding her customers in the door. She plans to offer bleaching, tinting, cutting, washing and styling to her customers — all jobs priced separately by the peso.

Now she's still learning the different styling secrets,

but soon she hopes to be able to put them into use.

"It would make me very happy," Cruz said. "It's my dream."

Cruz was once a salsa/rumba dancer. It didn't pay very well, but she said she enjoyed it. When her son, Michael, came along she had to stop dancing. It was then that she started at the vinegar factory.

"I worked very hard," she said.

Cruz would work days one week and nights the next.

"That makes it very hard to take care of a baby," she said.

She wants to start her salon so that it's less stressful and easier to take care of Michael.

The state has its own salons that men and women can go to for haircuts, but even though the haircuts are cheap, they aren't always the popular places to go. Salons run out of the home, such as Cruz's, would be more personable, said Lidia Diaz. Diaz goes to a *casa particular*, or a private home, to have her hair cut.

She said she doesn't like going to a government salon because the lines are long, the service is bad and they don't have decent hair products. The price of a state-run shop is much cheaper, only around \$1 or a few pesos.

Diaz said her long, black hair takes more time and costs her about \$10 to have it cut and colored at a *particular*.

"For me, it's expensive because my hair is very long," she said.

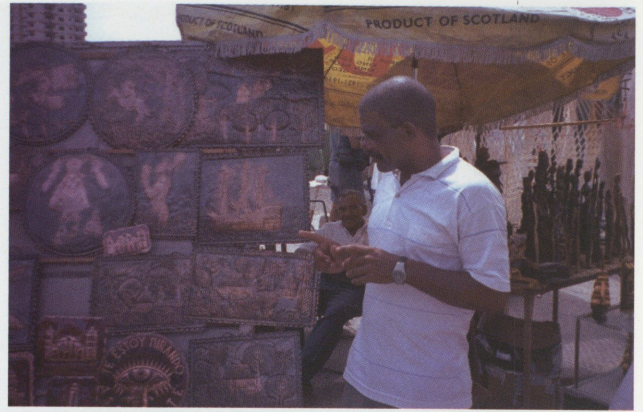
But Diaz insists that it's worth the extra expense to go to a *particular*.

Cruz doesn't think she'll have any problem getting customers to come to her salon either. She said when people see her customers after she's styled their hair, they'll want to use her as their stylist, too.



# A Shopper's Paradise

Story and Photos by Mandi Steele



Jesús Martínez offers passersby copper plates and wooden carvings he and his father made.

## Open market offers high value for low price.

A popular attraction for tourists in Havana are the outside markets where people can find a variety of clothing items, souvenirs and trinkets for reasonable prices.

Under umbrellas used to shade the vendors from the sun, tables are loaded with all kinds of jewelry, woodworks, belts, purses, shoes and cigar boxes to sell to anyone interested. If passersby don't stop and gawk on their own, the vendors are sure to try and lure them over.

Jesús Dominguez Martínez has been making decorative copper plates for 25 years and started selling them at the marketplace a year ago. His father manages the business, but they both work at the market and make the woodworks and plates to sell.

Depending on the size of a particular plate, price can range from \$15-\$40. They are engraved to show pictures of scenery, ships and famous buildings in Cuba. Martínez says he always inscribes his name in the corner so people will know it was his creation.

Iliana Marrero sits across from Martínez and also sells various woodwork. Wooden ships occupy most of her table and she says it takes her boss about 15 days to make a ship that will sell for \$25. And the price is always negotiable. Going from vendor to vendor, tourists can bargain to try and receive a lower than asking price on different merchandise.

Marrero said the markets are geared toward tourists, because Cubans can't usually afford souvenirs unless they have family overseas who will send them money.

In broken English she said, "Markets in Cuba are the exceptions," meaning anybody except Cubans usually shop there.

However, tourists might find the prices relatively cheap. A handmade wooden chessboard will start out at \$10, silver rings can be purchased for \$1-\$2, and an all-leather purse might sell for about \$10.

Gatiana Satiulina sells her handmade satin shawls for

about \$15. She's been crocheting for the market for nearly seven years. Her mother taught her how to crochet when she was young, and now she makes dresses, hats, blankets, shawls, shirts and hammocks for tourists to buy.

The market is open from 8:30 a.m. until the vendors decide to pack up at around 5:30 p.m. Marrero said she sees tourists from all over when she works at the market, but she said the majority are from Italy and Spain.



At her booth in the Havana marketplace, Gatiana Satiulina sells handmade clothing and accessories.







Gladys Jimemei started a business right outside of her home on the streets of Havana crocheting clothes for tourists.

# Gettin' Into the Biz

Story and Photos by Mandi Steele

**With government permission, small businesses survive on tourists.**

Gladys Jimemei sits under a dangling array of dresses, shirts and shawls she made herself.

Even in the hot sun of Havana, she continues to crochet as people walk past or maybe stop by to see the different crocheted creations she has to offer. She decided to turn her home into an outlet to sell her handmade items about six years ago.

Jimemei said she learned to crochet from her mother and grandmother and now tries to sell her finished items to tourists. Skimpy, crocheted undergarments dangle from a hook on her wall as she explains how many French and Italian tourists seem to like the crocheted material because it's breathable. She said she sells some of the dresses as cover-ups to be worn at the beach, but the

crocheted shirts are what sell the best.

Because Jimemei mostly relies on tourists for business, she said in the slow season for tourists, like the month of June, it is especially hard to scrape by. She must make a \$28 monthly payment to the government for a license just to be able to sell her clothes on the street.

"Everything must go through the government for a license," Jimemei said.

Many Cubans, like Jimemei, make small businesses out of their homes. Right next to Jimemei's home, another person sits by and tries to sell musical instruments like maracas to passersby. Homes can be converted into restaurants, fruit stands, makeshift motels





Argelio Sarria paints his own artwork of scenery around Cuba.

called *casa particulars*, or anything else that might make some money for the residents. Although the businesses are run out of their homes, they aren't privately owned businesses like they would be called in the United States. To have a legal business, Cubans must first register with the state and receive a license. The license fee is a monthly payment to the government and must be paid whether or not the seller is making money.

For Jimemei, she finds it difficult to pay the \$28 fee in the months when she isn't selling \$28 worth of clothing. Her husband, Argelio Sarria, helps out, however, selling his own specialty to tourists or anyone interested.

On the second floor of their small home, Sarria has a room solely devoted to his paintings, the curtains of the room dressed in one of Jimemei's crocheted curtain straps. In his studio, he has most-

ly landscape paintings on display, but he also has paintings of nude women and Cuban heroes.

He said he's been painting for 56 years. Smaller paintings line the couches and sell for around \$3 to \$5. But as the size of the painting goes up, so does the price. His landscape art is confined to Cuba; he has traveled around his country to paint scenes from different areas.

Palm trees swaying in the wind by a beach, the capitol building in Havana and views from the countryside are only a few of the paintings hanging on his walls. Sarria also admits that he relies on tourists to buy his paintings.

Tourists are important for many individuals and businesses in Cuba, and Sarria's and Jimemei's small business survives because of them.



Hand painted by Sarria, the painting is one of his scenery pieces.

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***"Everything must go through  
the government for a license."***

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# Myth Buster

Column by Philip Martin

## Traveling to other country disproves many misconceptions.

"Why do you want to go to Cuba? They hate Americans," my grandma said while slapping my arm.

I calmly tried to explain to my grandma that the Cuban people don't hate Americans, because they need the tourists' money to save their failing economy.

"You could get shot," my grandma said.

"No, Cuba has police whose sole job is to protect the tourists. Cuba is one of the safest countries outside of the United States," I said.

These are the same fears my grandma told me when I went to Belarus.

My grandma has no idea where Belarus is, but she is certain Belarussians hate Americans. She is like most Americans that believe a good portion of countries hate Americans.

This is true to a point, most Middle Eastern countries do hate us, but it's not true for Cuba. Cubans told me time and time again that the only problem between Americans and Cubans was the governments.

I went to Cuba expecting a hard time

talking to people. Dr. Gwen Murdock and her husband Dr. John Couper had prepared us for the trip.

They told us how friendly the Cuban people were.

I was a little skeptical.

Once we arrived and started talking to the people, using Couper as our interpreter, we soon learned that the people would talk to us about anything.

Many were happy just to practice their English.

One night, as my fellow editors and I were heading back to the our bed and breakfast in Havana, we decided to stop in a bar for refreshments where the waiter, whose name I don't know, decided to practice his English with us.

"You see that guy at the bar," he said.

"Yeah."

"He's a tourist and those two girls with him are prostitutes."

See what I mean?

This guy was openly talking about everything — even his dislike for the Cuban government (which is punishable

up to seven years in jail without a trial).

"My wife's brother escaped on a raft," he said.

He was a really interesting guy.

The man called his wife over, and she talked with us, too. While he was talking, he felt it was OK to fondle her.

Cubans face many problems, but are open about everything. I was finishing an interview when a lady I was interviewing welcomed me to the country and said she likes Americans but disliked our government.

I didn't feel like telling her Americans felt like her. People of other countries don't like our government but they like the people. There is a misconception in America about other countries. It's to the point that Americans don't trust people of other countries.

If given the chance, all Americans should travel to another country and not stay in areas full of tourists. People should travel to the ex-Soviet block countries or a Third World country.

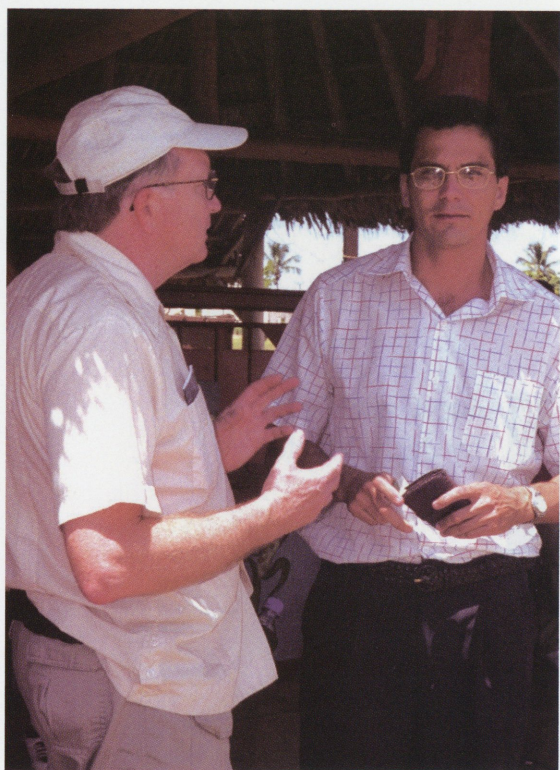
It's really an eye-opener.



Submitted Photo

From left to right, Philip Martin, Jerry Manter, Josh Ray, Mandi Steele and an English tourist met at a cave turned into Club Ayala in Trinidad. Entrance to the club cost \$10, and this included drinks.





Missouri Southern business professor Dr. John Lewis (left) asks Armando Flores, a Cuban tourist guide, questions about sugar cane.

# 'Two Different Worlds'

Story and Photo by Jerry Manter

It takes tourists to make tourist guide realize how beautiful Cuba really is.

Armando Flores knows he's a lucky man.

He's able to work one-on-one with tourists, see the sights of Cuba and rarely works behind a desk.

Flores is a tour guide — a job he loves.

"I get to know the many places of Cuba," Flores said. "I travel a lot."

Although a tour guide position isn't considered top employment in the United States, it's a different story for Cubans. Travel in the country is expensive, if not impossible. Most have never sat in a car equipped with air-conditioning.

"Travel for the common Cuban man is not possible," Flores said.

For Cubans, the opportunity to travel their island is an opportunity that's too good to be true. Flores feels the same. He attended Pedagogical University in Pinar del Rio, learning how to work with tourists and has studied English, French and German. Since tourism is so crucial to the Cuban economy, tour guides must learn two or maybe three languages to communicate with tourists. Flores, who was hired by Havanatur nine months ago, speaks fluent English and French. He's working on his German.

"You need to understand different cultures," Flores said.

Flores didn't have to worry about school tuition.

"You don't pay for school," Flores said. "It's a really good deal; it gives everyone a chance."

In the communist government, almost everyone is considered to be around the same income level. If anyone wants to go to college, it's possible and it's free.

"If you have powerful parents, it doesn't matter," he said.

Flores said he thinks higher education in the United States isn't

available for everyone like it is in Cuba.

He also doesn't understand why it's so expensive in the United States.

"There are so many brilliant minds that are being wasted because of money," he said.

Havanatur provides many services for tourists. Whether it's tourists interested in exploring the mountains or a group of bird watchers, it doesn't matter.

"You have to be prepared for them," he said.

"You have to understand tourists minds and find out what they care about."

During the high tourist months (November through April), Cuba overflows with tourism and Havanatur is booked solid.

"During the high season, I went two months without one day off," Flores said.

With a wife back home, it's tough being apart for so long. He tries everything to help her pass the time.

"I give my credit card to my wife and tell her to be happy," he said.

While Flores has enjoyed his job for the past nine months, he's most happy that his new job has given him the opportunity to discover Cuba, its beauty and understand all that it has to offer.

"Tourists would take pictures of the highway and hitchhikers," he said.

"I didn't see what was so interesting about it ... it was two different worlds."

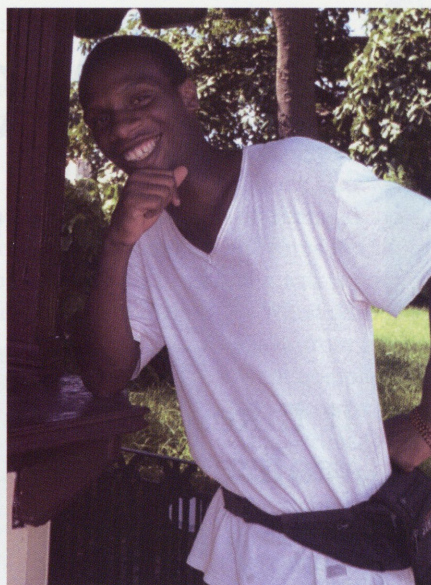
Tourists have helped him open up his eyes toward Cuba.

"I didn't realize how beautiful my country was until the tourists told me," he said.



# A Love/Hate Relationship With the U.S.

Story and Photo  
by Jerry Manter



Alexander Salagaria, a student from Havana, has mixed feelings about Americans.

## Many Cubans don't care for the American form of government.

While not even 100 miles separates America and Cuba, residents of the two countries continue to know little about their neighbor.

Americans see videos of Cubans dodging immigration officials in the Gulf of Mexico, and Cubans slowly learn about life in America through filtered media.

Even though the countries are a short flight away, there's still a tall fence slowing down the possibility of future working government relations.

"Although I don't meet Americans, I know half are good and half are bad," said Alexander Salagaria, a 19-year-old student in Havana.

Salagaria spent a sunny day with friends at an outside market in downtown Havana.

He's been studying English for four months and is impressed with how much he's learned in such a short time period. It's helped him familiarize himself with America and how the country is ran.

"I want to continue learning," Salagaria said.

Many Cubans share the same opinion about the United States: love the people, hate the government.

"The people in the United States are really good," said Flores

Zuniga, a tobacco farmer who lives outside of Havana. "Some have been to Cuba."

Zuniga isn't afraid to share his feelings toward America.

"The government is very bad," Zuniga said. "They kill people for money and land, like in Iraq."

While many young Cubans share the same opinions about America, many would still like to travel and visit America.

Yoel Jaure, a friend of Salagaria, hasn't seen his mother in three years. She was able to cross the Gulf of Mexico and find work in Miami.

"I miss her very much," Jaure said. "I hope she comes back."

Although Salagaria hopes to someday travel and see the world outside of Cuba, he knows most likely his dream will never come true.

He would like to see Italy or maybe even Denmark.

"It's really hard to travel outside of Cuba," Salagaria said. "It's just the system."

Zuniga, who was sporting a black Bob Marley T-shirt, also designs and makes necklaces to sell to tourists. His side job has let him meet many tourists over time and shape his opinion about America.

"The United States needs more peace and love," he said.

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***"The United States needs more peace and love."***

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# INCIDENT

# at the Airport

Story and Photo by Josh Ray

## Police question two Cuban citizens as terrorists at Santiago airport.

For two Cuban men, a trip to the airport to meet old friends turned into an encounter with the Cuban police.

Luis Santiago Hidalgo and Lazaro Moncada Merencio went to the Santiago airport to meet the Missouri Southern group as their plane landed.

Hidalgo and Merencio had met Dr. John Couper and Dr. Gwen Murdock on their previous trip to Cuba and were meeting them again along with a new group of people. Within minutes of embracing the old friends, airport police took the two away from the group.

As Hidalgo and Merencio were being led away, Couper tried to follow them and talk to the police.

The police would not let him.

"The cops didn't even want to bother John, because the police believe that the tourists should just be happy," Hidalgo said.

While it was the first time either of the men ever had a run-in with the police, the incident is one that many Cubans who go to the airport are subject to.

Merencio said Cubans are not allowed to go to the airport unless they are flying out.

"They are worried about people hijacking the planes and going to the U.S.," he said. "They just call it being a terrorist."

In February and April of this year, people took planes to the

United States three times by hijacking them, Hidalgo said. He said it's a problem in all Cuban airports.

Merencio said when the police took them away, the two were not accused of anything, only questioned. The police asked them if they were hustlers or if they were terrorists.

The men tried to explain they were

friends of the group, average Cuban workers and not doing anything wrong. In the office of the airport police, Merencio had to tell the police where he worked, how he knew the group and why he was at the airport.

The cops had to call the place he worked before they would believe him.

Both men said they felt embarrassment and fear from the incident. Hidalgo said it changed the way he looked at the police.

He said even though he is an honorable worker, he was treated like a criminal.

"Only if you're a bad person should you be treated like that," he said.

Hidalgo's level of confidence in the police dropped after the encounter.

He said he does not feel the police would do something unjust, just unfair.

"They treat a visitor very differently than they do a Cuban," Hidalgo said.

The police treat visitors with more respect.

After about a half hour of questioning, the two were let go.

Incidents like these happen often to Cubans, especially those who have something to do with tourists. If the police had not believed the two, they could have been taken to jail.



Lazaro Moncada Merencio, left, and Luis Santiago Hidalgo were taken in for questioning at the Santiago airport.





A Cuban hustles tourists with old newspapers.

# Beware The Cuban Hustler

Story and Photos by Jerry Manter

City tours, cigars just a few of bargains tourists can pick up.

Tourists beware. Take one step outside the hotel property and within 10 seconds a proposition will most certainly come calling.

"Where you from?"

"Wanna buy a Cuban?"

The Cuban hustlers. They're everywhere. While tourism is critical to the Cuban economy, street hustlers are frowned upon by the communist government. With just enough English, street hustlers are on a constant hunt for tourists, hoping to make a quick dollar. Some sell five-day old newspapers. Others offer city tours through unlicensed taxis.

"We take tourists anywhere they want to go," said Roman Odelin, a street hustler from Santiago.

Odelin admits he goes after tourists. He

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*"Where you from?"  
"Wanna buy a Cuban?"*

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did say, however, that there's bad hustlers and good hustlers. He said he's one of the good guys.

"We have many bad hustlers around here that give Cuba a bad image," Odelin said. "Bad hustlers are no good."

The most popular scheme is the selling of Cuban cigars.

Tourists visiting the country for the first time almost always purchase the famous cigars, and the hustlers know this.

This leads to many faulty sales of cheap

and poorly produced cigars.

"The best cigars are made in the factory, but bad hustlers will sell poor cigars on the street," Odelin said. "Some people don't give everything they say they will."

Odelin hasn't always been a street hustler. He was a successful carpenter, but an accident on the job caused him to retire from the business.

"I can't work because of my hand," he said. "Now, I don't work."

After his accident, Odelin joined forces with his brother and his taxi service. His brother drives the car, and Odelin wheels the tourists in it.

"We show people around Cuba," he said. "Whether it's the beach or a church, we will take the tourists there and back for \$15."

What separates Odelin from other





Roman Odelin, a street hustler from Santiago, said there are good and bad hustlers in Cuba. He said he's one of the good hustlers.

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***“We have many hustlers  
around here that give  
Cuba a bad image.  
Bad hustlers are no good.”***

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hustlers is if the tourists decline their offer.

“If the tourists don’t want to go anywhere, we don’t bother them,” he said.

However, a bad hustler will keep on nagging a tourist until they get annoyed or angry.

Even though Odelin considers himself to be a “good” hustler, he still has to watch his back. It’s illegal to harass tourists, and if caught, a fine and prison time isn’t unusual.

Before Odelin goes after a tourist, he always takes a quick look around his

shoulder. During the high tourist months (November through April), police and protection agents are on every street corner.

“I have to watch out for the police,” he said.

“If the police is around, I take tourists to a quieter place to avoid them.”

He’s been caught before.

“Sometimes, the police will make you pay 30 pesos.”

Juana Gonzalez, resident of Santiago, has become accustomed to hustlers and their presence on the streets. She under-

stands where they’re coming from.

“Hustlers don’t have any hard currency,” Gonzalez said. “Hustling is necessary for poor people.”

Gonzalez, who works at an eyeglass manufacturing company, makes a good living compared to the average salary. On a good month she’s able to take in 182 pesos a month. She knows some Cubans barely have enough money for food every day.

“People need to realize that hustlers just need to get by,” she said.



# Still Looking for Mr. Cuba

Story and Photo by Jerry Manter

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*"Cuban men are  
no different  
than other men  
around the world."*

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Gizeh Cauilo is searching for the perfect Cuban man.

## Women say dating, finding true love is difficult on the island.

When it comes to finding true love, Gizeh Cauilo is a typical Cuban woman.

She has dreams of finding Mr. Right.

But, like everywhere else in the world, it's a challenge.

"It's very difficult to find someone who will give me true love," Cauilo said.

Dating and relationships between men and women in Cuba share many of the same traits the United States is infamous for.

As a single woman, Cauilo said she easily gets frustrated with the men and how they can treat women. Cuban men will often play with a woman's feelings.

"The men talk a lot about marriage proposals," Cauilo said. "But many times the relationships don't go anywhere."

In the streets of Havana and Santiago, Cuba's most populous cities, many of its residents take to the streets outside their homes to socialize. Many drink rum, smoke cigars and play card games.

Cauilo enjoys meeting men in a more traditional way — out on the town.

"I usually meet men at parties," she said.

She's hoping to find a man who can treat her well and make her happy. If he's wealthy, it would be an added bonus. She's

not too confident she will find one though.

"I don't bother to think about money because rich men are so rare," she said.

Noelvis Garcia, a friend of Cauilo, feels the same about Cuban men.

"Cuban men are no different than other men around the world," Garcia said. "They're all the same."

Tourists seeing the night life on the island for the first time will see many white older men spending time with young Cuban women.

Prostitution is a continuous problem.

"Some men offer money for love," Garcia said. "There are few ways to make money."

Cauilo and Garcia said they aren't prostitutes, but have been offered money for sex many times. Either way, the friends believe it's a problem, and too many men and women get caught up in the illegal behavior.

"They (men in Cuba) get around," Garcia said.

While divorce in the states is at an all time high (nearly half of all marriages end in divorce), it's a different story for Cubans.

It's not that the couples aren't having

problems. Most simply can't afford it.

"Divorce isn't a problem in Cuba," Cauilo said.

"It's very costly and there's a lot of paperwork."

Ivan Rodriguez, a resident of Havana, has been married for five years with his wife Maria. Although he's married, Rodriguez remembers how it was hard to be single, living on his own and trying to date.

"A lot of the times, it's hard to date in Cuba," Rodriguez said. "Most Cubans are more worried about making money and being able to eat."

If a man and woman opt for marriage, it's not as easy as it is in the United States.

"It's very tough to get married here," he said. "You have to live in Cuba for 30 years."

As Garcia continues looking for the right guy, she stays busy spending time with friends and working at a local gift shop.

She's optimistic he will turn up eventually.

Until then, she's just hoping to find someone single.

"Cuban men will say they're in love, even married men," Garcia said.



The image is a word cloud shaped like a map of the United States. The words are arranged to form the outline of the country, with the most prominent words being 'Creativity', 'Integrity', 'Diversity', and 'Opportunities'. These words are in large, bold, white font and are positioned in the center of each state. The background is dark, and the text is light, making the words stand out. The word cloud is composed of many words of various sizes and orientations, creating a dense, textured effect. The words are in various shades of gray, and the overall composition is a map of the United States.

# Join Crossroads

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# Cuba...



A young resident from Santiago is upset after her mother told her to come inside her house.



Jerry Manter



A street band plays salsa music on the outskirts of Havana.

Josh Ray



# A Look Inside



Jerry Manter

Cubans walk the suburbs of Santa Clara. Many living quarters are small and filthy.



Jerry Manter

A young child relaxes behind window bars at her home in Santa Clara.



Jerry Manter

A group of children relax after a game of soccer in the streets. Baseball and soccer are the most popular sports in Cuba.



Josh Ray

A Havana resident wheels his taxi down the street. Bicycle taxis are a popular form of transportation.



The book cover features a vertical strip on the right side showing a classical building facade with columns and steps. Overlaid on this strip are large, stylized, semi-transparent letters 'S', 'D', and 'F' in a dark brown color. The left side of the cover is a light cream color with a subtle, faint watermark of a classical building facade. At the bottom of the vertical strip, the words 'cuba' and 'semester' are printed in a dark brown, serif font.

cuba  
semester